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THE LIBERTY OF PROPHESYING

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THE LIBERTY OF PROPHESYING

WITH ITS JUST LIMITS AND TEMPER CONSIDERED WITH REFERENCE TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE MODERN CHURCH

Lyman Beecher Lectures delivered 1909, *before the Yale Divinity School, and Three Sermons*

By H. HENSLEY HENSON

B.D. (OXON), HON. D.D. (GLASGOW)

Canon of Westminster and Rector of S. Margaret's, Westminster, Sometime Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford

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To

ARTHUR TWINING HADLEY, LL.D.

PRESIDENT OF YALE UNIVERSITY

AND

EDWARD LEWIS CURTIS, PH.D., D.D.

ACTING DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

THIS VOLUME OF LECTURES
DELIVERED WHILE THEY WERE IN OFFICE
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PREFACE

THE Lectures here published were delivered on the LYMAN BEECHER Foundation in Yale University in 1909. They are printed exactly as they were delivered. Three sermons have been added, all treating of the Christian ministry in one or other of its aspects. These will, perhaps, serve to develop some points too briefly touched on in the Lectures. The sermon entitled "Christian Teaching" was originally preached before the University of Cambridge on November 8, 1908, and repeated in substance before Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., on May 2, 1909.

There are two objections which appear to me so probable that I must needs think it well to anticipate them. These Lectures, it will be said, are unduly *controversial* and excessively *local*, and on both counts they are ill suited to serve the purposes of the LYMAN BEECHER Foundation. To the first of these objections I can but answer that, in the present circumstances of English-speaking Christendom, the Christian ministry is inevitably the subject of acute con-

troversy, and that, since preaching is the principal function of the Christian ministry, any effective discussion of it cannot avoid a controversial character. To the next, I must answer that, in allowing myself to give so large a place to those aspects of my subject which were mainly insular and Anglican, I was not only keeping within the sphere of my personal knowledge and experience, but also bringing before my hearers a point of view which was in their case relatively unfamiliar. It seemed to me that in adopting this course, I could best serve the purpose which must have originally suggested the invitation to lecture.

It must, of course, be frankly owned that I chose a subject which was apparently and acutely controversial. I did so with a very definite design of directing attention to the grave situation into which the Christian preacher has been brought by the circumstances of the time, and of emphasizing certain manifest but most difficult obligations which that situation imposes. Nor was I wholly without hope that my handling of a theme so perplexing, however inadequate and even unworthy in itself, might have the effect of inducing abler and better men on both sides of the Atlantic to address themselves to its frank and practical consideration.

In addressing the clergy I have never lost sight of the laity. The Liberty of Prophesying,

which I have claimed for the first, can only be refused to the injury of the last. I could wish that what I have written might fall under the eyes of the religious laymen of the churches. If I might succeed in arresting their attention, I should indeed have not written without effect. For the indifference of the Christian laity is the most favourable of all conditions for the development of "clericalism": and, as surely, the best of all securities against "obscurantism" is the active and intelligent interest in ecclesiastical politics of thoughtful, religious, and educated laymen. The degree to which the laity concern themselves in the affairs of the Church might well be accepted as a sound test of its intellectual and spiritual health.

In America I suppose that the worst dangers to the clergyman's liberty are those which arise from the ignorance of congregations, the vagaries of religious individualism, and the "intolerable strain" of the denominational "struggle for existence." In England these dangers are certainly not absent, but, at least within the National Church, they are for the present dwarfed by a domestic peril, which has no exact counterpart within the other Protestant churches. The Tractarian revival of mediævalism has proceeded to great lengths, and its effects are not limited to the puerile craze for "pageants" in and out of the churches. In the now fashion-

able repudiation of the name and character of a Protestant church; in the arbitrary and profoundly irrational emphasis laid on the letter of the ancient creeds; in the growing isolation of the Anglican Church under the withering influence of the sacertodalist dogma; in the substitution of the personal authority of bishops for the impersonal authority of law; in the exaltation even by the bishops themselves of episcopal authority above the Law, are enshrined the gravest menace to the intellectual liberty of the Anglican preacher.

It is indeed certain that a large proportion of the English clergy, and the immense majority of English laymen, have no sympathy with the tendencies now prevailing in the hierarchy; but an episcopal church perforce utters itself through its bishops, and the episcopal bench in England is at the present time strongly Tractarian. In these circumstances the discontent, which undoubtedly exists, can hardly take definite shape or find effective expression. The situation is assuredly very perplexing. New interests are crowding on to the arena of public life, and the older interests are being thrust into the background. The sudden emergence of Socialism is diverting men's minds from spiritual issues; and the most materialistic version of Christianity naturally finds it easiest to effect a concordat with the new secularism. Explain it how you

will, the public takes but a languid interest in the fortunes of the clergy. From every point of view the outlook for an honest English preacher is not very encouraging.

If this were the place, I should like to say much of the extraordinary kindness with which I was received in Yale, and, indeed, everywhere in America. How can I ever forget the unwearying solicitude, and considerate hospitality, which filled the time spent in that wonderful country with the pleasantest memories. It must suffice by this single reference to indicate to my American friends the deep sense which I have of their goodness, and to assure them that the recollections of my first visit to the New World (which they induced me to undertake) are in the fullest sense delightful.

H. H. H.

Westminster Abbey,
August 10, 1909.

CONTENTS

LYMAN BEECHER LECTURES

		PAGE
I	Functions and Claims of the Preacher	1
II	Of Denominational Subscriptions	31
III	Of Evidences of Personal Belief	62
IV	Of the Interpretation of Scripture in Sermons	92
V	Of Reserve, and the Casuistic Problem Involved in the Preacher's Use of Scripture	122
VI	Of Social and Political Preaching	152
VII	Of Proportion in Religious Teaching	184
VIII	Objections and Conclusions	214

SERMONS

IX	Divine Vocation	244
X	Authority in Religion	260
XI	Christian Teaching	273

THE LIBERTY OF PROPHESYING

I

FUNCTIONS AND CLAIMS OF THE PREACHER

PREACHING may perhaps be described as the principal function of the Christian minister. Even on the sacerdotalist hypothesis of the ministry, it is only in his capacity as preacher that the Christian minister can bring any important contribution of his own to the work of the ministry. To the validity of sacraments, of course, he can add nothing by his virtues and efforts, and from such validity his vices and negligences can withdraw nothing. That "the unworthiness of the ministers hinders not the effect of the sacrament" is the indispensable postulate of sacerdotalism, and has been vehemently insisted upon by the Church against countless heretics. As soon, however, as the "priest" leaves the "altar" or the confessional, and enters the pulpit, the situation changes. Much turns there on the preacher's personal fitness for his work, and on the conception he has formed

of it. His personal sincerity, his known convictions, his acquired knowledge, his natural ability, even his reputation, appearance, manner, and voice, will all have a bearing on his preaching, and affect its fortunes. The truth of his message, of course, is independent of the particular form in which he may present it, but its power to attract men, secure their audience, and affect their minds will be to a very considerable degree contingent on the individual through whom it was delivered. It is, indeed, never to be forgotten that the saving power of the Gospel of CHRIST is at all times beyond the control of the preacher. There is a mysteriousness in Divine action which eludes observation and defies analysis. You may not teach the art of winning souls from Chairs of Rhetoric, or cast into a formula the secret of waking consciences. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The fortunes of the Divine seed are strangely determined by the state of the human soil into which it is cast; and that vitally important condition is never completely known to the sower, and often is almost altogether outside his knowledge. In all cases, we may never forget, the spiritual result of preaching lies beyond the preacher's vision and control. As if for ever to disallow

the too facile suggestions of vanity, and once for all to cut the springs of that excessive homage which is so readily offered to the preacher's eloquence and personal charm, the ALMIGHTY has willed to effect HIS most dramatic spiritual conquests through the unlikeliest instruments. The preacher counts for little in the record of the greater conversions of Christian history. The preaching of STEPHEN left SAUL of Tarsus apparently untouched: the sermons of S. AMBROSE impressed, but did not convince, AUGUSTINE: no preacher brought S. FRANCIS to CHRIST, or MARTIN LUTHER, or IGNATIUS LOYOLA, or our own later prophets, BUNYAN, FOX, and WESLEY. None of these could be claimed by any human teacher or preacher as the trophy of his ministerial warfare, and yet the whole course of Christianity has been affected by their conversion. Their experience has been reproduced in countless instances of less conspicuous Christians. We cannot, then, emphasize too strongly the independence of HIS own appointed agencies which has marked the action of the HOLY GHOST from the first, and it is important that we should do this in order that with a deeper humility we may do full justice to the fact that such appointed agencies exist, and have ever formed the ordinary means of Divine activity. Of these agencies preaching must certainly be regarded as the most authoritative and the most effica-

cious; and with respect to preaching we have to recognize the perplexing and dismaying truth that its effectiveness depends in a degree which it is difficult to exaggerate upon the personal competence and labour of the preacher.

The recognition of this truth ought to determine the preacher's estimate of his office, and his treatment of it. S. PAUL was using no mere figure of speech when he described the Christian minister as "GOD's fellow-worker." Rather it is the most suggestive because also the most accurate definition of the ministerial office. Called to a sublime partnership with his Creator, the preacher must concentrate all his powers on the ministry which he has received. His natural abilities must be carefully cultivated; no effort must be considered too great for the attainment of the knowledge required for religious teaching: sympathy and wisdom must direct the trained faculties and the accumulated learning: vigilant practice must perfect what enthusiasm began. Only so will the human agent in any measure answer to the Divine purpose in his ministry. So long as the obligation of this sublime response to the vocation and claim of GOD be paramount in the preacher's mind, he will be in little danger of falling into either of the different yet allied errors which mostly threaten him. On the one hand, he will not be able to think meanly of his office; on the other hand, he will not exaggerate

the value of his personal contribution to the ministry of preaching. Straining to reach the highest conceivable standard, he dare not acquiesce in any version of duty less than the best of which he is capable. He will not sink to the sham humility which excuses the preacher's ignorance or indolence by the plea that in conversion GOD must be all in all. The question for the honest preacher's conscience is not how little use he may be, but how much he ought to be, when GOD is working through and with him. This will be the spur of unceasing effort — not pride, or ambition, or professional zeal, but the conviction that "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

Here it may fairly be objected that a fallacy is latent in the very word "preaching," which surely could not bear one and the same sense throughout the whole period since Christianity began. What is there really in common between the preaching of which S. PAUL wrote, and that which we must have in mind throughout these lectures? Is it possible without extravagance to identify the subject-matter of ordinary modern sermons with that Divine "gospel" which the Apostle declared himself under "necessity" to preach? Clearly there is need for some preliminary definition of terms, and explanation of methods.

It certainly must be admitted that between

the preaching of the first days of Christianity and that of the twentieth century there is a very great difference. S. Paul, the greatest of all the apostolic preachers, was preëminently a missionary, and his normal preaching must find such parallel as the modern Church can offer in the mission field. Even so the parallel is by no means close, for the Christian Apostle fulfilling his task within the Roman Empire had no experience of the characteristic difficulties of the missionary of our own time, who must bring his message to the members of the ancient religious systems of Asia, or to the fanatical followers of the Arabian prophet, or to the variously degraded barbarians of Africa. In spite, however, of great differences, there is a recognizable identity of function and fortune between Christian missionaries in all ages and in all circumstances. The preaching with which we are concerned in these lectures is not that of missionaries, and has but little of the evangelistic character. In an ancient Christian society the ministry is not mainly concerned with "proclaiming" the "good tidings" of redemption, but rather with teaching professed believers the true content and practical significance of their belief. In the New Testament the functions of "preaching" and "teaching" appear to be distinguished, and, though both might be united in the same individual, as certainly was the case with the Apostles them-

selves, yet commonly they were assigned to different persons. In the work of the modern preacher "preaching" and "teaching" must always be combined, and the two functions will in practice be difficult to keep distinct. All this bears very importantly on the conception we must form of the modern preacher's duty.

If for the "preacher" as such it may be thought that no more knowledge is requisite than that of the "gospel" which he is to proclaim, and which he himself has accepted, — and this is precisely the apology which is offered for the illiterate evangelists of our time, — for the "teacher" manifestly a different rule must be necessary. He has to make that "gospel" the basis of moral and intellectual discipline: to show its bearing on thought and action: to make clear its obligation with respect to the many perplexing demands of social and political duty: to vindicate its truth against rival systems of belief and knowledge, which disallow and seem to disprove it. The modern preacher, therefore, must become the theologian, the moral philosopher, the casuist, the controversial divine, the apologist of the faith; and in every one of these characters he will stand in need of specific knowledge, experience, wisdom, and skill.

The mere statement of the situation indicates sufficiently the discrepancy which cannot but

exist between the preacher's theory of office, and his personal competence to reduce that theory to practice. Who could possibly be equal to the demands of an office so many-sided and touching so many interests? Necessarily the ministry has fallen far short of its theoretical functions. As the Church extended, and made acquaintance with new and perplexing situations, there was effected an allocation of duties within the ranks of the official ministry. There were professional theologians, moral philosophers, casuists, controversial divines, apologists, and these prepared the work for the preachers. So long as the tradition of Christian teaching was within the Church uniform, authoritative, and unquestioned, it sufficed that the individual preacher should draw upon the general resources of orthodox religion; but, with the emergence of the characteristic conditions of modern Christianity, another and still more perplexing situation was created for the preacher. He had to make his count with a confused doctrinal tradition, and a disunited Church; perforce he had to choose between conflicting authorities, and sit in judgment on the creed he would elect to defend. Accordingly, albeit necessarily dependent on the learning and thought of others, he had to sustain before his congregation the character of teacher, and accept full personal responsibility for whatsoever teachings he adopted. The very multitude and

variety of experts would compel him to exercise discrimination in his choice of guides, so that in the last result what he offered to his congregation would have behind it no better guarantee than that of his own personal competence. We may observe that this inalienable, plenary, and manifold responsibility of the preacher is generally recognized in his preparation for the ministry, which, however inadequate in quality, is not as a rule insufficient in range. Theology, moral philosophy, ecclesiastical history, casuistry, controversy, apologetics, are all included in the course of professional training, though none can be taught in more than the barest outline.

Experience, indeed, shows that the actual situation of the modern preacher may be, and commonly is, far less difficult than its theoretical statement suggests. The perplexities of Christendom are not necessarily perceived within a parish or congregation; and religious use and wont will go far to provide a working substitute for authority. The multitude of Christian folk are too simple and uneducated to raise any doctrinal questions which would seriously perplex the preacher, whose difficulties, if he has any, will for the most part be self-proposed. The standing themes of Christian preaching are still invested with so profound reverence that, whatever may be the case privately and in the minds of men, open questioning will hardly be toler-

ated within religious circles. An uncriticised convention prescribes for the preacher what he must say, and what he ought to think, with respect to all the greater concerns of faith and life; let him but respect that convention, and his difficulties need not be great, while his professional success may be considerable. Such respect, however, is plainly becoming more difficult, and the best modern preachers feel the difficulty most acutely.

A quiet life and a popular ministry do not appear the worthiest objects of a Christian preacher's effort. His own conscience and his own reason insist upon having satisfaction also, and the whole sincerity of his preaching turns on the circumstance whether or not that satisfaction can be found. The preacher's personal claim cannot be considered apart from other claims with which it is inseparably connected, which are not less legitimate, or less important, and which lend themselves more easily to satisfaction. There are the claims of the congregation, of the denomination, of the Christian Church, even of the State, all of which are intertwined with the preacher's demand for "Liberty of Prophesying." The adjustment of these competing claims is the standing problem of religious statesmanship, and many circumstances of our times have rendered the solution of it a specially urgent and a specially difficult matter. Two

of these circumstances deserve our particular attention.

In the first place, Christianity no longer holds the supreme position which for centuries it has held in the thought of civilized men. The realm of knowledge has been so greatly extended within the last few generations, and the diffusion of knowledge has of late years been so rapid, that a situation has been created which has no real precedent in Christian experience. In the ancient world, indeed, before the downfall of the Roman Empire, the Church was confronted by a society which had the prestige of an immemorial civilization, and was richly endowed with art, science, and literature. Paganism contested the ground with Christianity with many sources of strength, but the extreme disadvantage of its grotesque and immoral creed more than counterbalanced its advantages in other respects. Christianity conquered the ancient world by clear title of moral and intellectual superiority. The downfall of the ancient empire, however, altered the situation greatly to the advantage of the Church. Among the Teutonic barbarians, who, on the morrow of overthrowing the imperial system, accepted the yoke of the imperial Church, Christianity had no rival. Their paganism was a poor and powerless thing, which had no characteristic art, literature, or architectural monuments to preserve its spirit and perpetuate

its influence; civilization not less than religion was the gift of the Christian missionaries. Accordingly, mediæval Christendom had the aspect of a social order rooted in religion and everywhere coloured by it. Thought and life were controlled by Faith. Theology was the queen and sum of the sciences. Philosophy and history were the handmaids of orthodox dogma; literature and the arts aspired to illustrate and exalt the reigning creed. No doubt there were many recalcitrant movements of the intellect and the conscience throughout the Middle Ages, but in the prevailing state of knowledge these could not find any effective or enduring expression. The Renaissance was perhaps as much the revelation of existing forces, as the introduction of new ones. It brought the great discovery that humanity could no longer be confined within the strait limits of mediævalism, that the régime of mere authority had reached its term in Church and State, that the individual spirit had come to maturity, and would claim its heritage of freedom. That crucial phase of the Renaissance, which we are accustomed to call the Reformation, witnessed the vehement assertion of the independence of the individual conscience and reason. The affirmation and enthronement of the principle of private judgment in religion were its transcendent achievements. In the course of the centuries which have passed since

that epoch of enfranchisement, Christendom has been revolutionized. Not only has the volume of human knowledge been vastly increased, but the very conception of knowledge has been altered, and the relative importance attached to the different kinds of knowledge has wonderfully changed. The sciences called physical, or natural, have acquired a sound method, and by its aid attained to results which have not only effected a revolution in the conditions of human life, but have deeply influenced the whole course of human thought. Every fresh discovery, every advance in the practical application of scientific discoveries, every phase of philosophical speculation, has had its effect within the sphere of theology. Moreover, we may almost say that within the last century a whole series of new sciences have come into existence which directly bear upon Christianity. The more exact study of language, the criticism of texts and documents, the science of comparative religion, the application of psychology to the phenomena of faith — these are practically new studies, and they impinge directly on the territories of Christian belief. One result of this vast and various intellectual movement has been the dethronement of theology from its ancient supremacy, and the substitution of its younger rivals. An immense and various secular literature has come into existence, and human life in

civilized communities has become filled beyond all precedent with secular interests. Everywhere the Christian Church has been outgrown by the popular life, and has declined into one factor, albeit still the greatest, of the social order of Christendom. Christianity is plainly in presence of a non-Christian public, which regards it with curiosity, or impatience, or dislike, or open hostility, never with deference or affection. Two cultures are in existence, an old and a new, and these are shaping two types of character, and projecting on the horizon of human thought two ideals of life. Even within the nominal membership of the Christian churches the conflict of ideas has made its appearance, and expresses itself in that difference between the lay mind and the clerical, which has become one of the salient features of modern ecclesiastical politics. Within the Roman Catholic sphere the situation has developed into a dangerous crisis, for there the principle of authority has been pushed to its logical conclusion, and the new demands of the modern world have been met by steady and relentless negation. The divergence between the official doctrine of the Church and the accumulated knowledge of mankind has become extreme, and arrests the attention of the multitudes to whom the modern state has brought the elements of education. Education and the Church have the aspect of natural antagonists:

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the citizen has to make his choice between loyalty to the modern State, to which perforce he is ever more closely bound, and obedience to a Church which claims to be international and supernational, infallible, and unchanging. In every sphere of thought, in every department of social life, over the whole field of politics, the battle is joined. The extraordinary interest everywhere manifested in the so-called Modernist movement within the Roman Catholic Church attests the general apprehension, that unless some reconciliation can be effected between Christianity and the modern world, the gravest conceivable disasters to human society cannot be averted.

For manifest reasons the crisis within the sphere of the Reformation is less acute. The necessity of harmonizing theology and the accumulated knowledge of mankind might seem to be the necessary assumption of every reformed Church, for on no other assumption could the immense breach with the doctrinal tradition of Christendom implied in the fact of reformation be justified. Human nature, however, is bewilderingly illogical, and never so much so as in the conduct of its religious concerns. Yet no extreme of illogical obscurantism has been able to carry any reformed Church to such uniformity of hostile prejudice as that which has marked the attitude of the Roman Church towards new knowledge. The religious heirs of the greatest

theological innovation of history have not been able, in spite of themselves, to escape from the law of their position. Theological obscurantism within the Protestant sphere is illogical, half-hearted, and ineffective. Persecution on the basis of a formal recognition of private judgment is too manifestly paradoxical to be either impressive or permanent. Accordingly, the conflict of old and new has within the Protestant sphere been less embittered, less universal, less extreme. Nevertheless there also it proceeds, and creates for the churches a situation of grave embarrassment. An educated laity, still attached to the churches, has come into existence, and is bringing a new and powerful influence to bear on ecclesiastical affairs. The intellectual conditions of preaching are seen to be of more than clerical concern. A preacher in bondage to doctrinal forms, which cannot fairly be reconciled with the well-established knowledge of the time, is seen to be ill-placed for maintaining that standard of personal sincerity which is indispensable to effective teaching, and condemned to a loss of public respect, which must in the long run be fatal to spiritual influence. The modern preacher cannot be indifferent to the intellectual demand of the educated laity, nor can he lightly draw upon his ministry the suspicion of disingenuousness. Already there are not lacking signs of a decline in the influence of the pulpit, and the Protestant

churches are said to be losing their hold on the public life of the time.

In the next place, the difficulty of recruiting the ranks of the ministry is forcing itself into notice within all the Christian churches. No doubt there are many reasons for this disquieting fact, and some of the most important lie outside the control of the ecclesiastical authorities altogether. The enhanced interest of human life, to which we have adverted, and its increasing secularity have their influence on men's minds, and indispose them to regard with favour the career of a Christian preacher. The atmosphere of modern life is mundane and selfish; the fair and tender growths of spiritual aspiration faint and fade in it. Moreover, practical considerations count for much. The ministry of a settled church must needs take the character of a profession, by which men earn their living, and which they embrace with that legitimate but unheroic purpose. Parents and guardians have much to say in the choice of profession by those for whom they are primarily responsible. Divine vocation, the indispensable basis of valid ministry, reaches many, perhaps most, of the clergy of Christendom indirectly, through the counsel of relatives and the leading of circumstances. It is manifest that the view of parents and guardians will be determined not inconsiderably by circumstances, which might well be ignored by

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the ablest and best equipped, are arrested on the threshold of the ministry by the aspect of intellectual bondage which that ministry seems to present? Is it not the case that this aspect is most repulsive to those whose intellectual qualities are finest, and whose consciences are most sensitive? Must it not be an anxious and urgent question for the churches whether they are not actually themselves the responsible causes of their own gravest embarrassment?

Thus from the salient facts of the present situation the necessity for action clearly emerges. If the educated laity are not to be wholly alienated within the Protestant sphere (as already appears to be the case within the Roman Catholic Church) a larger "Liberty of Prophesying" must be conceded to the preachers whom they are required to accept as religious teachers. If the Christian ministry is to attract thoughtful and self-respecting men, it must promise a career which shall not humiliate them in their own eyes, or prohibit to them the most important exercises of their teaching office.

It may, perhaps, be here objected that a necessary practical distinction is being ignored when so much freedom is demanded for preachers. Why may not some limits be set to the public exercise of a liberty which yet is not refused? Liberty of thought and (within certain necessary and reasonable bounds) liberty of speech may

surely be conceded, without throwing down once and for all the barriers, which have been carefully erected by former generations against the risks and scandals of unchecked individualism in the pulpit. The function of the preacher must be more narrowly conceived, and more strictly defined. The paramount consideration for the Church is not the satisfaction of his conscience, but the spiritual edification of the people to whom he is sent with a specific work to perform. At all hazards they must not be made to stumble by his conscientious self-assertion. Now it cannot of course be denied that there is a core of reasonableness in such an argument as this, and, albeit variously expressed, it is certain that it commends itself very widely to religious folk. If, however, it be seriously considered, we shall find that the practical bearing of the truth it contains is misconceived, and that the whole argument presupposes an impossible situation.

Consideration for the needs, and even, within limits, for the preferences of the congregation belongs to the pastoral duty of the preacher, not primarily to the formal regulation of his office. The suggestion that there may be degrees in the liberty permitted to the Christian preacher, greater here, less there, offends against the plainest verities of human nature. You must deal with every man as an indivisible unit; if you con-

cede, as indeed you must concede, liberty of thought, you cannot reasonably attempt to prohibit liberty of speech. The indispensable assumption of the last prohibition is the rightness in principle of the first. A Christian minister may fairly be prohibited from preaching agnosticism or free love because it cannot be supposed that, even in the recesses of his own thought, he could be either an agnostic or an antinomian. The postulate of all subscription must be the correspondence of thought and speech. Accordingly, if you tolerate liberty of speech anywhere, you must tolerate it everywhere. There must not be one measure of liberty for the lecture hall and the theological treatise, and another for the pulpit and the parish magazine, however widely the specific exercise of liberty may, and indeed must, vary. In guarding against public scandal you must take care that you do no injury to private honour, for if once you wound private honour you will have opened the door to the worst of all public scandals. Moreover, if you conceive yourself bound to make the attempt in the interest of the congregations, you will be greatly deceived, for the congregations also have moved far from the old moorings of traditional orthodoxy, and they will not long acquiesce in any treatment which ignores the fact. Of all the fatuous performances of CHARLES I's government, none was at the time more exasperating,

and none seems to us more futile, than the attempt to pacify the distracted Church of England by prohibiting the preachers from handling subjects of controversy in the pulpit. The mere attempt to make peace by the edict of authority indicated the absence of any adequate recognition, either of the importance of truth in the eyes of serious men, or of the imperative nature of religious conviction. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," says the Gospel, and therefore it is equally unjust and unavailing to restrain the utterance of beliefs which you must perforce allow to be tolerable. We shall have occasion to point out in the course of these lectures, that the nature of modern objections to traditional statements of doctrine does not really allow of their concealment by the preacher who admits them. Not to acknowledge them in the process of preaching is implicitly to disallow them: there is no middle way of calculated and conscientious silence open to an honest man. "Suppressio veri" implies also and inevitably "suggestio falsi." Here also the law holds: "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

In these lectures, therefore, the term "Preaching" will receive the widest possible extension. It includes every method of official utterance, and covers the whole area of the preacher's ministry. In the pulpit, manifestly, his deepest convictions ought to find expression, for there

he speaks with the full authority of his sacred office, and presumably with careful previous consideration of his words. As it is unjust to impose unwarrantable limits on his "Liberty of Prophesying" in sermons, so it is unreasonable to release him from the fullest burden of personal responsibility for what he thus delivers. No apology for doctrinal error seems to be more truly irrelevant than that which pleads the circumstance of preaching as an excuse for careless or ignorant utterance. The accused preacher may fairly demand that the tenor of his doctrine shall not be deduced from a single sermon: that due allowance shall be made for the emotional or rhetorical element which may be permissible in any sermon: that his characteristic modes of argument and forms of expression shall be considered and appreciated: that the correlation and balance of truths in his scheme of preaching shall be recognized and allowed for, but he may not ask that a lower standard of knowledge and accuracy should be applied to the public exercise of his sacred ministry than would properly be applied to any private and unofficial utterance to his thought. On this point it is impossible to be too insistent. Every step towards the complete enfranchisement of the Christian preacher ought to be conditioned by the acceptance on the part of the preacher himself of a more rigorous standard of responsibility in preach-

ing, and a severer rule of self-criticism. Assuredly, if careless, or uninformed, or exaggerated, or misleading language be ever reprehensible on the lips of the ordained teacher, most of all must this be the case when the words which are passing on those lips are public and official, spoken with solemn invocation of the HOLY SPIRIT, and accompanied by acts of common worship. In these circumstances of Christian preaching, perhaps, will be found the most effectual securities against the abuse of the preacher's "Liberty of Prophesying."

In adopting the title of JEREMY TAYLOR'S famous treatise, you may perhaps fairly ask from me some words of explanation. You will, indeed, have already observed that the title is adapted as well as adopted. I propose to consider "The Liberty of Prophesying with its just limits and temper" with a twofold restriction of reference, viz., that which is implicit in the prescribed subject of the LYMAN BEECHER lecture, and that which is stated in my adapted title. I am concerned with the case of the Christian preacher, and with the circumstances of the modern Church.

JEREMY TAYLOR'S discourse was designed to show "the unreasonableness of prescribing to other men's faith, and the iniquity of persecuting differing opinions." He wrote as one of a persecuted minority, and it is not difficult to trace in his argument the influence of his fortunes.

His treatise is rather an eloquent plea for a right sense of proportion in religion than for toleration, though his actual proposition to tolerate all Christians who would subscribe the Apostles' Creed went so far beyond the charity of his contemporaries, that they regarded his work with disapprobation and alarm as dangerously latitudinarian. Nor was he himself consistent, for when the wheel of changing fortune had set him in the seat of authority, and thus placed in his hands the opportunity of putting his generous precepts into practice, he does not appear to have exhibited any greater tolerance than that of the other Restoration bishops, and rather less than some. His theory has reached us without the recommendation of his example. In spite of all, however, the "Liberty of Prophesying" will always merit the study of thoughtful men, and hold an important place in the literary treasure of the English-speaking churches. It is full of luminous wisdom, and varied learning, and exalted eloquence, and it is a repertory of keen analysis and felicitous argument, and remorseless criticism. Moreover, though JEREMY TAYLOR himself restricted unduly the application of his arguments, the arguments themselves remain, and justify larger consequences than he imagined. The Epistle Dedicatory addressed to LORD HATTON requires but little modification to make it relevant to the situation with which we

are familiar. It would, for instance, be difficult to improve on the following statement of the intolerant temper with which we also have to contend: "The fault I find, and seek to remedy, is, that men are so dogmatical and resolute in their opinions, and impatient of others disagreeing, in those things wherein is no sufficient means of union and determination; but that men should let opinions and problems keep their own forms, and not be obtruded as axioms, nor questions in the vast collection of the system of divinity be adopted into the family of faith."

Would it be possible to state the case against clerical subscription more effectively than in these words? —

"This discourse is so far from giving leave to men to profess anything, though they believe the contrary, that it takes order that no man shall be put to it: for I earnestly contend that another man's opinion shall be no rule to mine, and that my opinion shall be no snare and prejudice to myself; that men use one another so charitably and so gently, that no error or violence tempt men to hypocrisy: this very thing being one of the arguments I use to persuade permissions, lest compulsion introduce hypocrisy, and make sincerity troublesome and unsafe."

Two hundred and fifty years have greatly strengthened his appeal to human experience in the interest of religious toleration: and the pro-

gress of historical studies has added force to his argument that, since the churches have continually changed their doctrines, it is probable that complete and unadulterated truth belongs to none of them:

"And then, if we look abroad, and consider how there is scarce any church but is highly charged by many adversaries in many things, possibly we may see a reason to charge every one of them, in some things; and what shall we do then? The Church of Rome hath spots enough, and all the world is inquisitive enough to find out more, and to represent these to her greatest disadvantage. The Greek churches deny the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son. If that be false doctrine, she is highly to blame; if it be not, then all the western churches are to blame for saying the contrary. And there is no church that is in prosperity, but alters her doctrine every age, either by bringing in new doctrines, or by contradicting her old; which shews that none are satisfied with themselves, or with their own confessions. And since all churches believe themselves fallible, that only excepted which all other churches say is most of all deceived, — it were strange if, in so many articles, which make up their several bodies of confessions, they had not mistaken, every one of them, in some thing or other. The Lutheran churches maintain consubstantiation, the Zuinglians are sacramentaries, the Calvinists are fierce

in the matters of absolute predetermination, and all these reject episcopacy; which the primitive church made no doubt to have called heresy. The Socinians profess a portentous number of strange opinions; they deny the Holy Trinity, and the satisfaction of our Blessed Saviour. The Anabaptists laugh at Pædobaptism: the Ethiopian churches are Nestorian. Where, then, shall we fix our confidence, or join communion? To pitch upon any one of these is to throw the dice, if salvation be to be had only in one of them, and that every error that by chance hath made a sect, and is distinguished by a name, be damnable."

The most recent experience does but illustrate his contention that the favourite ecclesiastical policy of official suppression and disingenuous handling of books defeats itself, and implies a humiliating confession of self-distrust. Might not the Modernists imagine that their own situtation had inspired the following passage?

"Of the same consideration is mending of authors, not to their own mind, but to ours, that is, to mend them so as to spoil them; forbidding the publication of books in which there is nothing impious or against the public interest, leaving out clauses in translations, disgracing men's persons, charging disavowed doctrines upon men, and the persons of the men with the consequents of their doctrine, which they deny

either to be true or to be consequent; false reporting of disputations and conferences, burning books by the hand of the hangman, and all such arts, which show that we either distrust God for the maintenance of His truth, or distrust ourselves and our abilities. . . .

"It is but an illiterate policy to think that such indirect and uningenuous proceedings can, among wise and free men, disgrace the authors, and disrepute their discourses. And I have seen that the price hath been trebled upon a forbidden or condemned book; and some men in policy have got a prohibition that their impression might be the more certainly vendible, and the author himself thought considerable."

Finally, might not all Christians still ponder with advantage his insistence on the supreme importance of moral rightness, and the relative pettiness of intellectual error? Can any controversialist afford to forget his warning against the blinding tendency of unbalanced zeal?

"To my understanding, it is a plain art and design of the devil, to make us so in love with our own opinions as to call them faith and religion, that we may be proud in our understanding: and besides that, by our zeal in our opinions, we grow cool in our piety and practical duties; he also by this earnest contention does directly destroy good life, by engagement of zealots to do anything rather than be overcome, and lose

their beloved propositions. But I would fain know, why is not any vicious habit as bad or worse than a false opinion? Why are we so zealous against those we call heretics, and yet great friends with drunkards, fornicators, and swearers, and intemperate and idle persons? I am certain that a drunkard is as contrary to God, and lives as contrary to the laws of Christianity, as a heretic; and I am also sure that I know what drunkenness is: but I am not sure that such an opinion is heresy: neither would other men be so sure as they think for, if they did consider it aright, and observe the infinite deceptions and causes of deceptions in wise men, and in most things, and in all doubtful questions, and that they did not mistake confidence for certainty."

II

OF DENOMINATIONAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

THE preacher is the officer of a church, not only of the Church or Society of Believers, but also of a separately organized section of it. His membership may be matter of course, as it commonly is with the preachers of the National Churches, or it may have been determined by his own deliberate choice, but it is a fact with which he must reckon. He has to make his count with the claim which his church or denomination prefers, to stake out for him the limits of doctrinal liberty, and to prescribe, in advance of his thinking, and we must add in advance also of his knowledge, the lines of his religious thought. The case of the churchless or undenominational preacher need not detain us, for in so far as it is legitimate at all, it must be supposed to belong to the category of extraordinary ministries, which find their conditions of exercise where they found their original commission, in the direct inspiration of the HOLY SPIRIT, and offer the sufficient credentials of authority in their results. Most commonly the "free lance" of modern experi-

ence is either a mere adventurer, who takes his directions from his observations of the popular taste in doctrine, or a half-educated enthusiast, who seeks no guidance other than his own perception of truth, and tolerates no authority beside that of his own zeal. From the start of Christianity, the preacher has commonly been an ordained minister, and as such has been held to utter the general belief of the Church. At no time has it been tolerated that he should claim the right to make innovations in the doctrinal tradition of the Church whose officer he is. Even the "charismatic" ministries of the first ages were subject to testing by the Church, and "sound doctrine" was ever an indispensable evidence of genuine inspiration. So long as the external unity of the Church was maintained, it was comparatively easy to identify "heresy" by formal marks, and to deal summarily with convicted heretics. There could be no question of any claim on the part of preachers to construct their own creeds, or to criticise the official credenda; but when, as a result of the Reformation, external unity was destroyed, a wholly new condition, at once favourable and unfavourable to the preacher's doctrinal liberty, came into existence. The weakening of ecclesiastical authority by the disruption of the mediæval Church was itself eminently favourable to intellectual, and therein also to theological liberty, but the

conditions of the new situation were not in some important respects favourable to the preacher's doctrinal independence. The separated churches had perforce to settle their constitutions, and to frame their apologies. The first was a necessity for themselves; the last was an obligation to the rest of the Christian world, but, however legitimate, and, indeed, indispensable, denominational "confessions" may have been, they had the regrettable result of adding to the properly religious requirements of the preacher's office a series of lower demands, dictated as much by the political circumstances as by the distinctive beliefs of the newly organized churches. As denominations multiplied, confessions lengthened, because they aspired to more precise and detailed distinctiveness of religious attitude. First the National Churches; then the international unions of National Churches; finally, the non-National Churches formed by separation on some specific doctrinal or disciplinary principle — all in succession set forth statements of doctrine, and proceeded to exact from their ministers subscriptions to those statements. It is to be remembered that, throughout the whole area of the Reformation, preaching was exalted as the principal function of the Christian ministry. The doctrinal soundness of the preacher became an object of the first importance. Everywhere, perhaps inevitably, the object was pursued by the same method, viz., the

exacting of subscriptions of assent to the established confessions of denominational belief.

It is certainly true that, at first, no distinction in principle was drawn, or intended to be drawn, between the case of the minister and that of the lay member of the church. The doctrines set forth in the denominational confession were held to be necessary for both, and were insisted upon with a grotesque assumption of religious certitude, but in practice a distinction quickly grew up between them, for, while subscription was invariably and publicly exacted from ministers, it was rarely demanded from laymen. Inevitably the former appeared to be more strictly controlled in their religious thinking than the latter, and the profoundly irrational, and not less profoundly mischievous, notion of two lists of Christian credenda, the one long for the ministry, the other short for the laity, took root in the popular mind, and finally established itself as an assumption of popular religious discussions.

When we inquire what may be the degree of obligation which an honest conscience must recognize in the formal subscriptions of the modern preacher, two general considerations may be advanced as fairly relevant to the case of all the Protestant confessions. First, these confessions must always be regarded in the light of that explicit repudiation of ecclesiastical infallibility, which is vital to Protestantism in all its forms.

Next, they must be looked upon as the doctrinal deliverances of the modern churches, not as mere echoes from some previous age.

When the Thirty-nine Articles declare that General Councils are not infallible, it cannot be thought that the English Convocation possesses any superior quality which should clothe its decisions with perpetual validity. Similarly, when the Westminster Confession affirms that "all synods and councils since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err and many have erred," it clearly disallows in advance the claim that the decisions of the Assembly of Divines are unalterable, or that the General Assembly of 1647, which approved them, was an exception to the rule of fallibility. Indeed the Confession draws the obvious inference when it declares that such synods and councils, *i.e.*, presumably their doctrinal decisions, "are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as an help in both." It follows that those Anglican and Presbyterian preachers who find the official formularies of their respective churches unsatisfying and even unhelpful are entitled to claim that, on the recognized principles of Protestantism confessed in the formularies themselves, no terrestrial authority exists, or ever has existed, competent to provide doctrinal decisions which shall be securely guaranteed against inadequacy, and that when they in their turn seek for an official

recognition of the defects which they perceive in existing formularies, they are but following the example of the Reformers themselves, those courageous innovators to whom under GOD they owe the very existence of Protestant Christianity. Moreover, there is both piety and good sense in NEWMAN'S contention in the famous Tract XC, and, if we substitute the Scriptural term "Christian" for the unhappily ambiguous term "catholic," we may conveniently adopt his own words as our own: "It is a duty which we owe both to the Catholic Church and to our own, to take our reformed Confessions in the most catholic sense they will admit; we have no duties towards their framers." The preacher's duty is to the church which commissions him, and to the people to whom he is commissioned, and neither duty can be separated from the primary and indefeasible obligation which he owes to his own conscience. Only in so far as the official denominational formulary utters the intention and sets forth the faith of the present Church does it answer to the primary purpose of such a formulary. No church has any interest in exacting irrelevant subscriptions, and subscriptions to propositions which have ceased to be living beliefs are as irrelevant to any spiritual interest as the obsolete dogmata of alchemists and astrologers. Nor is it wholly impracticable to attempt the provision of certain tests by which the rele-

vancy of an ancient doctrinal confession can be appraised.

Thus, in the first place, due allowance must be made for the fact that the denominational formularies of Protestantism have in no slight measure the character of emergency-documents, that is, documents composed with reference to the necessities of specific historic situations. These determining necessities, however, have largely disappeared, or fallen into comparative insignificance, and, in so far as this is the case, it may fairly be maintained that the Confessions themselves have become obsolete, and cannot be supposed to have more than an historical interest. The preacher of to-day can hardly be held to an *ex animo* acceptance of doctrinal pronouncements which were dictated by, and must find their justifications in connection with, the political exigencies of his church in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. He may, indeed, by an effort of the historical imagination transport himself into the past, and there give an unqualified approval to the action of his religious ancestors, but this is something quite distinct from continuing to give such approval when the circumstances which made it possible have faded from mind and cannot be renewed.

In the next place, the doctrinal decisions of the past must be read in connection with the knowledge of the time. That may be a just decision

in view of one state of knowledge which becomes wholly the contrary in view of another. All judgments must be related to the evidence on which they were based; it argues no imputation on the soundness of any judgment to say that it would have been different if other evidence had been available, nor does a final court refuse to revise verdicts if it can be shown that new light is accessible which compels revision in the primary interest of justice. The principles of judgment remain unaltered by the change in the manner of their application. In the case of denominational formularies framed in a distant age, this distinction between principles and their specific applications is equally reasonable and important. We may adhere to the first while we reject the last; nay, a sincere and intelligent acceptance of the one may compel in the circumstances a rejection of the other. The validity of any application of a principle lies in the assurance that all the relevant circumstances have been considered. In so far as the formularies consist of applications of principle, they lie open to the objection that the relevant circumstances are continually changing, and that consequently they are increasingly inadequate. Truth is indeed unchanging, but it is never seen in the same perspectives, so that its aspect is never precisely the same. Doctrinal definitions are attempts to give permanence to the specific aspects of religious truth which present them-

selves at a given juncture; they begin to grow inadequate from the moment of their drafting. In effect, denominational Confessions must be subjected to a careful process of historical translation before their precise doctrinal authority at any given time can be ascertained. To stereotype, and clothe with sacred obligation, the decisions which uttered the opinions of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, would be a proceeding very irrational and unfortunate. It cannot be seriously maintained, that the patent unreason and impolicy of such an understanding of subscription is irrelevant to the practical question before us.

Thirdly, these Confessions must not be supposed to have any direct reference to subjects which have emerged since the time of their composition. It may, indeed, fairly be argued that new questions ought to be answered on the principles already accepted by the Church, and this may be admitted if due allowance be made for the new conditions of circumstance and knowledge.

Thus the subscription of the preacher to his denominational formulary must take account of its obsoleteness, of its irrelevance, and of its silence. These considerations, if frankly admitted, will be found to remove most, if not all, the difficulties commonly expressed with respect to denominational subscriptions. It must not,

however, be forgotten that the embarrassments to which the formularies reduce those who sign them, are but a small part of the total mischief which may be ascribed to them. Even more important are the indirect effects which flow from the parade of lengthy doctrinal confessions, which nobody fully believes, and everybody explains more or less non-naturally, as the preliminary condition of ministerial office. Ingenuous and devout young men are made to stumble on the threshold of the sanctuary. The door which may not admit such opens easily to the flippant, the shallow, and the insincere. "If I subscribe, I subscribe my own damnation," wrote CHILLINGWORTH to SHELDON, when the necessity of subscribing the Thirty-nine Articles was pressed on him, and though his scruples were overcome and he finally accepted the necessity of subscription, his words continue to command a larger approval than his example. If the particular points on which his conscience revolted most decisively against the statements of the official formularies, the obligation of the fourth Commandment on Christians, and the acceptance of the Athanasian Creed as truly Scriptural, do not appear to many modern Anglicans to be very formidable, the reason may well lie in the long course of minimizing sophistry which they have experienced. On young men still, as then on CHILLINGWORTH, the burden of indefensible dog-

matic statements falls heavily, and none can know anything of modern life without being aware of the fact. Men who are eminently qualified by character, training, and ability for the Christian ministry are excluded from its ranks by the lengthy and largely irrelevant formularies which the Episcopalian and Presbyterian churches require them to subscribe with whatever laxity of meaning. Nor is even this the whole extent of the mischief. The credit of the Christian ministry is lowered by the apparent and admitted discrepancy between the convictions and doctrine of preachers, and the professions which they have solemnly and publicly made. Even when the preacher can justify subscription to his own conscience, as indeed I think he can on a supposition which I will state immediately, he cannot make his situation clear to the public, but must fall under the unexpressed but emphatic censure of the very persons to whom he is religiously commissioned.

The supposition on which self-respect can be reconciled with subscription is a continuous and genuine effort to revise or remove formularies which are seriously open to objection. Subscription under protest is the actual situation, and the protest becomes morally respectable only if followed up by honest effort to effect the requisite reformation.

That the doctrinal Confessions of the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries are from every point of view ill-suited to the needs of the churches which have inherited, and still enforce them, is almost universally admitted within the churches themselves, and from time to time efforts have been made to provide some relief to the consciences of those who have subscribed, or are called upon to subscribe them. The relief actually provided, however, appears to be inadequate, and expresses rather the consciousness of difficulty than any clear view of its nature or extent. An obstacle to any effectual action is certainly involved in the fact that the authors of whatsoever relief can be obtained have themselves subscribed the objectionable formularies, and are in a sense pledged to their defence and maintenance. Experience has proved the extraordinary strength of a sentiment, which invests official subscription with solemn moral significance, even in the teeth of the plainest indications that it is, and is regarded as being, merely conventional. A sense of personal obligation lingers in the mind long after all serious belief in the specific doctrines has perished; and good men are entangled in casuistic perplexities, which too often conceal from them the true character of their own conduct, and even dissipate the natural sense of words. The notion of revising the existing formularies, or of providing new ones to replace them, appears to command little support in any

quarter. Thoughtful men cannot but perceive that, even if such a course were practicable, the provision of a new or revised formulary could not but induce a repetition of the old difficulty after a longer or shorter interval of time, and would in any case fail to secure universal approval. It is, moreover, widely felt that the present time is peculiarly unfavourable for any theological reconstruction of an authoritative kind. In many important respects the age is transitional, calling rather for large tolerance of anomalies than for precise and binding regulation.

While, therefore, the historic Confessions have been preserved intact, attention has been devoted to the provision of a form of subscription which shall be compatible with considerable divergence of personal belief, and allow the largest latitude of interpretation. Thus in the year 1865, the Clerical Subscription Act brought considerable relief to the clergy of the Church of England, by substituting for the rigorous grammatical assent and consent exacted by the Caroline Act of Uniformity, a form expressed in quite general words. It may be observed that the Church of England has never held any very exalted doctrine of subscription. The English Reformation was in the main the work of the State, and this circumstance imparted to the system of the Established Church something of the practical expediency which is native to political arrangements. The work of

Henry VIII and Elizabeth, of Charles II and William III, was inspired rather by political statecraft than by personal conviction or ecclesiastical theory. The latter motives may be the more respectable, but the former is apt to be the most accommodating. It is also to be remembered that the Church of England, in spite of its theoretically national character, failed from the very start of its history as a reformed and independent church to secure the undivided acceptance of the nation, and was always confronted by powerful recalcitrant minorities. This circumstance has tended to infuse an accommodating temper into the ecclesiastical administration, so that a latitudinarian tradition has generally mitigated the legal system, and gone far to minimize the religious significance of doctrinal subscription. Accordingly the yoke has been heavier in appearance than in reality. Nevertheless the legal subscriptions have been and are still widely resented, and the more sensitive conscientiousness of modern times renders the old anodynes less and less effective.

The sixteenth century was in many respects a greater age than the seventeenth, and its superiority is exhibited not least in its religious formularies. These deal rather with large principles than with dogmatic schemes. They belong to an epoch of original thinking, not to one of controversial definition. They are designed as

the platform of national Christianity rather than as the basis of ecclesiastical constitutions. In the seventeenth century controversy prevailed: the war of ideas was in progress, and was being waged with all imaginable ferocity. Elaborate theological systems had been drafted, and claimed from their adherents complete and exclusive acceptance. Accordingly, the doctrinal confessions of the age were detailed, logical, precise, and intolerant. The contrast between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries is well indicated by that between the Thirty-nine Articles of 1562 and the Westminster Confession of 1647. It is not without interest that the Assembly of Divines had originally designed a revision of the English Confession, and actually revised the first fifteen Articles. As they went on with their work it became apparent that the doctrinal system of CALVIN, and the presbyterian polity with which it was associated, were not easily to be harmonized with a Confession which had no proper connection with either; and in the sequel a wholly new doctrinal Confession was provided.

The Thirty-nine Articles have never taken high rank as a theological formulary. The apologists of the English Confession have mostly dwelt on the skill with which it has avoided exact definitions, and its competence to include in a single church representatives of the most diverse beliefs. The Westminster Confession, on the

other hand, has been most praised for the logical precision and all-embracing character of its theological teaching. It may be described as the most admired and the most resented of all the doctrinal confessions. Its comprehensive and systematic character explains both the admiration and the resentment. Dr. Hetherington, in his well-known "History," may be taken as an excellent representative of thorough-going admirers, but his eulogistic language will also serve to indicate the reasons why the modern Presbyterian finds the admired document so intolerable. After naming the leading members of the Assembly, he proceeds to speak of their work in these flattering terms:

"These learned and able divines began their labours by arranging, in the most systematic order, the various great and sacred truths which God has revealed to man; and then reduced these to thirty-two distinct heads or chapters. These were again subdivided into sections; and the committee formed themselves into several sub-committees, each of which took a specific topic, for the sake of exact and concentrated deliberation. When these sub-committees had completed their respective tasks, the whole results were laid before the entire committee and any alterations suggested, and debated till all were of one mind, and fully agreed as to both doctrine and expression. And when any title or chapter

had been thus thoroughly prepared by the committee, it was reported to the assembly, and again subjected to the most minute and careful investigation, in every paragraph, sentence, and even word. All that learning the most profound and extensive, intellect the most acute and searching, and piety the most sincere and earnest, could accomplish, was thus concentrated in the Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith, which may be safely termed the most perfect statement of Systematic Theology ever framed by the Christian Church." [1]

The evident sincerity of the author may excuse but cannot justify this extravagant laudation of a doctrinal formulary, which expresses the hardest and least acceptable of theological systems in the most crudely uncompromising terms, and was indeed the work of indifferent scholars in a bitterly controversial mood. In attempting to mitigate the burden of subscription to the Westminster Confession the unestablished Scottish churches have adopted the expedient of passing "Declaratory Acts," explaining the sense in which the churches intend the formula of subscription to be understood. The expedient is more ingenious than satisfying, for the authorized sense too plainly contradicts both the precise language and the known intention of the Confes-

[1] *v.* History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, by W. M. Hetherington, D.D., 4th Edition. Edinburgh, 1878.

sion itself. The United Free Church has combined the "Declaratory Acts" of the two churches of which it has been formed. The Established Church is still engaged in the perplexing task of drafting a new formula of subscription.

The action of the churches has a wider influence on the legal subscriptions than may be supposed or intended. It sanctions a method of handling the doctrinal formularies, as well as interprets them in certain particulars. Take the case of a preacher in the United Free Church of Scotland. At his Ordination or Induction he is required to declare that he "sincerely owns and believes the doctrine of this Church, set forth in the Confession of Faith approven by Acts of General Synods and Assemblies"; that he "acknowledges the said doctrine as expressing the sense in which he understands the Holy Scriptures, and will constantly maintain and defend the same." He is further required to "disown all Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, Erastian, and other doctrines, tenets, and opinions whatsoever, contrary to and inconsistent with the said doctrine of this Church." It is scarcely possible to imagine an ampler or more precise adherence to the distinctive doctrine of the Westminster Confession, for the pledge is twofold, first, acceptance of the doctrine itself, and, next, to make doubly secure, the "disowning" of its historic rivals. The modern Church, however, in authoriz-

ing the preacher to condition his adherence to the Confession by the glosses of the "Declaratory Acts," really evacuates subscription of all definite or serviceable meaning. For these glosses are really categorical contradictions, and can only be fairly appreciated as cancelling the propositions which ostensibly they interpret. The point is sufficiently important to merit illustration. The Confession asserts the characteristic Calvinistic doctrine of the total depravity of fallen man in terms of crude and severe decisiveness. Men are said to be "wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body," "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil," "bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal." The Declaratory Act takes all sense out of these appalling statements by declaring "that, in holding and teaching acording to the Confession of Faith, the corruption of man's whole nature as fallen, this Church also maintains that there remain tokens of his greatness as created in the image of GOD; that he possesses a knowledge of GOD and of duty; that he is responsible for compliance with the moral law and with the Gospel; and that, although unable without the aid of the Holy Spirit to return to GOD, he is yet capable of affections and actions which in themselves are virtuous and praiseworthy." Would it be excess-

ive to say that the Declaratory Act offers as a gloss on the Confession a careful statement of the very teaching which the Confession was designed to prohibit? Again, the Confession asserts with the utmost lucidity the characteristic teaching of CALVIN with respect to the non-elect members of the human race. "The rest of mankind," runs the terrible formula, "GOD was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice." The Declaratory Act takes the whole sense out of this dreadful teaching by declaring "that while the Gospel is the ordinary means of salvation for those to whom it is made known, yet it does not follow, nor is the Confession to be held as teaching, that any who die in infancy are lost, or that GOD may not extend His mercy for Christ's sake, and by His Holy Spirit, to those who are beyond the reach of those means, as it may seem good to Him, according to the riches of His grace." Can it be denied that this is the very teaching which the Confession was intended to disallow? Similarly, when the Declaratory Act asserts that "this Church disclaims intolerant or persecuting principles, and does not consider her office-bearers, in subscribing the Confession, committed to any

principles inconsistent with liberty of conscience, and the right of private judgment," it cannot be doubted that it directly traverses the doctrine of the twentieth and twenty-third chapters of the Westminster Confession.

From all this it seems fairly to follow that the preacher, when he finds himself compelled to place his own glosses on other statements of the Westminster Confession, which the Declaratory Acts have omitted to handle, but which are necessarily affected by the anti-Calvinistic doctrine admitted in the glosses they have authorized, cannot be equitably refused the right to adopt the same frank liberty of setting aside the distinctive teaching of the formulary by which he is legally bound. In other words, the didactic freedom of a preacher, bound by a subscription which is patient of such interpretation as is officially recognized in the United Free Church, appears to be complete: and it remains a question for that church whether anything is really gained by exacting a subscription, which manifestly does not mean what it pretends to mean, and which may mean the precise contrary. Such subscription cannot be serviceable, and must be misleading. What conceivable advantage to the church can be set in the scales against the inevitable discredit and perplexing confusion?

In illustrating my argument from the case of the United Free Church of Scotland, I must not

be supposed to suggest that the situation in that church differs in any serious degree from that in the other Protestant churches, save perhaps for the special difficulties inherent in so Calvinistic a formulary as the Westminster Confession. The English clergyman's "assent" to the Thirty-nine Articles and the Prayer-book is admittedly compatible with a definite repudiation of a good many propositions therein contained, and there is sufficient truth in the old description of the Church of England as possessing "a Popish Liturgy, Arminian Clergy, and Calvinistic Articles" to make the attempt to deduce from the Prayer-book a perfectly symmetrical and coherent system of doctrine rather desperate. It is a question for the authorities of the Anglican Church, whether anything is really gained by maintaining the demand for a subscription which pretends so much and need mean so little. It embarrasses the English preacher, and it does not even provide the church with any security worth having against his doctrinal vagaries. It places a formidable weapon in the hands of scorners of religion in general and opponents of Anglicanism in particular, for they can ridicule the inconsistency and plausibly question the sincerity of preachers at once so tightly bound and so clearly free, but it paralyzes the hand of ecclesiastical authority when it seeks to restrain the heretic by compelling it to employ as its legal weapon

a formulary which not even the strictly orthodox can wholly defend. Even those churches, Congregationalist, Baptist, and Methodist, which do not require their preachers to subscribe doctrinal confessions, but have recourse to carefully drawn trust-deeds in order to guarantee in the pulpits the continuance of sound teaching, are found to be in no better case. A striking example of the impotence of trust-deeds as a barrier against theological innovation has recently attracted wide notice in England and America. It is said that the "City Temple," which has become suddenly notorious as the centre of the "New Theology," put forward by its popular and gifted though precipitate and eccentric minister, is held on a trust-deed, which prescribes the Westminster Confession as the standard of doctrine, which shall govern the preaching in that important pulpit. Everybody feels, however, that it would be intolerable to eject Mr. CAMPBELL from his church by appealing to a document to which indeed he must be supposed to be legally bound, but which not even his most severe critic is prepared to accept for himself. On the evangelical principle implicit in the words, "Let him that is without sin among you first cast a stone at her," it is perceived that the enforcement of the trust-deed would be an infringement of equity.

I shall be challenged at this stage to explain what right, if any, I am prepared to concede to

the denomination. Are no doctrinal pledges to be required from preachers? and must the congregations be left without protection to the theological vagaries of the clergy? Postponing for the present the most important part of the answer which these questions may receive, I mean, the manifest right of every Christian Church to satisfy itself, so far as is possible, that the men whom it is desired to accept, and commission as preachers of Christ's religion, are themselves Christ's disciples, it must suffice to indicate two legitimate purposes of denominational subscription.

First, the candidate for the Christian ministry may fairly be required to endorse *ex animo* the distinctive attitude of the church whose minister he aspires to become, with respect to other churches and to burning questions of religious politics. It is manifest that in the present state of Christendom any man who feels himself divinely called to the Christian ministry must decide to what section of the Christian society he will attach himself. Having made his choice, it follows that he must accept frankly and loyally the consequences. Let me illustrate from the case of my own church. The Thirty-nine Articles define the position of the Church of England with respect both to the Church of Rome and to certain sectaries, and also give authoritative answer to some questions of great practical

importance at the time. It is admitted that the Thirty-nine Articles are now very largely obsolete. The issues with which they are concerned are, to a very great extent, dead issues. Most part of the properly theological Articles, apart, of course, from those which state the fundamental verities of Christianity, may come under this description. If anyone will be at the pains to read through such Articles as the ninth, "Of original or birth-sin"; the tenth, "Of free will"; the eleventh, "Of the justification of man"; the twelfth, "Of good works"; the thirteenth, "Of works before justification"; the fourteenth, "Of works of supererogation"; the seventeenth, "Of predestination and election," not to mention many others, he will feel at once that there is no reality in exacting subscription on such issues from a modern Christian. There are, however, other issues dealt with in the Articles, which are still living. The old controversy with Rome remains an active controversy still, and the Church of England would seem as fully justified as ever in requiring that her ministers should accept honestly her view of the issues in debate between the churches. That no branch of the visible Church is exempt from error (Art. XIX); that the doctrinal authority of the Church is subject to the written Word (XX); that General Councils are not properly infallible (XXI); that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not ordained of Christ to be gazed

upon, carried about, reserved, lifted up, or worshipped (XXV and XXVIII); that the Cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people (XXX); that it is lawful for the clergy as for all other Christian men to marry at their own discretion (XXXII); that every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, ceremonies or rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying (XXXIV); that the Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in England (XXXVII), are definitions of denominational attitude with respect to practical matters of great consequence, and it cannot be questioned that the Church of England is entitled and indeed necessitated to require from her official representatives a formal, public, and precise endorsement of that attitude. Similarly, that the Moral Law is binding on Christian men (VII); that Infant Baptism is agreeable to CHRIST'S institution (XXVII); that capital punishment is legitimate, and that Christian men may at the commandment of the Magistrate wear weapons and serve in the wars (XXXVII); that the riches and goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same (XXXVIII); and that judicial oaths are not prohibited by Christianity, are definitions of denominational attitude on practical matters of manifest importance, which are not less in debate in the twentieth century than they were

in the sixteenth. It is plainly reasonable that the Church should require from its commissioned representatives an acceptance of its platform on all such matters.

Next, the candidate for the Christian ministry must be reasonably required to accept the working system of the church whose commission he aspires to receive. This point has far more importance than perhaps at first sight may appear. The working system of a Christian church provides a continuous check on official dishonesty. It is probably the most effective protection against religious insincerity which the congregation can possess. For no man who was not a very cynical and callous hypocrite could contemplate a lifetime given up to the career of a Christian minister implying, therefore, throughout its course the conduct of a public service of the congregation which is everywhere inspired by the conviction that CHRIST is Divine, the rightful Object of Christian worship, unless within his own personal life that conviction were paramount. The aphorism of the orthodox theologians has its justification in conscience and in reason, — "lex orandi, lex credendi." It seems to me the most effective and the least oppressive method of enforcing the indispensable standard of personal belief to emphasize this aspect of the preacher's life. He is a man legally required, legally bound, to conduct Christian worship. Apart from personal dis-

cipleship, and the implied conviction that such worship is reasonable and morally obligatory, his professional activity would torture him as a very Nessus robe. I may observe, in passing, that this indirect consequence of the preacher's official duty is for manifest reasons best secured in churches which make use of liturgical forms in the conduct of public worship, and may perhaps be offered as not the least important consideration which recommends the time-honoured liturgical system. A manifest incongruity between the preaching and the liturgical forms prescribed by authority could not fail to arrest attention, and would be universally recognized to be intolerable.

When all is said, it surely must be allowed that the claims of the churches have been built up mainly at the cost of the Church: that in reducing them we shall restore the greater and older rights of the Body of Christ to their due prominence: that whatever respect we yield to them must be provisional and contingent; that the inexorable condition of that respect ought to be the sovereign interest of Christianity itself. Distinctive doctrinal subscriptions are plainly becoming unreal throughout the Protestant world; for the theological bases of historic denominations are vanishing before the solvents of history and criticism, and the churches are becoming conscious of substantial agreement in all necessary truth.

The conviction has formed in the minds of sincere men in all the churches, that the official parade of obsolete confessions is indefensible, that it brings no strength to the cause of truth, and dangerously compromises the sincerity of spiritual witness. There are prophets among us who proclaim the approach of a great reconciliation. We are becoming suspicious of denominational zeal, critical of denominational success. The categories of competitive commerce no longer seem in our eyes decent or even tolerable for the expression of the Religion of Fraternity. DEAN RAMSAY relates the story of an English traveller in Scotland who, as he passed through a district unusually full of variously designated churches, remarked to the coachman that there must be a great deal of religious feeling in a town which produced so many houses of GOD. "Na," said the man quietly, "it's no religion, it's *curstness*," *i.e.*, crabbedness, insinuating that acerbity of temper as well as zeal was occasionally the cause of congregations being multiplied. It is high time that practical recognition should be given to the religious agreement which is acknowledged to exist behind the spiked ramparts of discordant formularies. "I believe the doctrine of the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches to be practically identical," said the present Moderator of the Church of Scotland to the General Assembly. Interchange of pulpits is becoming com-

mon between the preachers of different churches, and manifestly it implies a consciousness of doctrinal unity. If such unity really exists — and no man who has any competent acquaintance with the theological literature of the English-speaking world will doubt that it does — how superfluous and futile these denominational distinctions of doctrine must be! Unhappily in these matters reason and charity have not the field to themselves. Every denomination takes the character of a powerful vested interest, in which the personal vanity, social consequence, and even financial advantage of many individuals are deeply engaged. This fact adds sinister weight to the arguments of natural conservatism, and perpetuates distinctions which have long lost religious meaning. How long will it be before we perceive that the denominations have outlived their historic justifications, and now hinder that supreme interest of religious sincerity which once they served? The bustling mundane zeal of the "business men of the churches," who "push" the fortunes of their sect with the unscrupulous ardour of successful, self-advertising tradesmen is the strength of the denominations and the bane of the Church. If only the lower and perverted enthusiasms of denominationalism could be conquered and exorcised by a higher and more spiritual loyalty to the family of CHRIST, the essential unreality of distinctive denomina-

tional subscriptions would be unreservedly acknowledged, and the final enfranchisement of Christian preachers in all the churches finally secured.

III

OF THE EVIDENCE OF PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP AND THE OBLIGATION OF THE CREEDS

THE preacher stands before his congregation as the "ambassador on behalf of CHRIST." His words, therefore, must have behind them the motive of personal conviction, and the authority of personal experience. Only on that supposition will the consciences of honest men tolerate his claim to speak with authority in the Name of CHRIST. The conception of a merely forensic advocacy of the Gospel, such as the barrister brings to the service of his client, is wholly intolerable. No contradiction can be imagined more repulsive and degrading than that which is presented by the spectacle of an unbelieving preacher. The mere suspicion of personal insincerity is enough to destroy the preacher's influence, and to sterilize his ministry. "A traitorous commander, that shooteth nothing against the enemy but powder, may cause his guns to make as great a sound or report as some that are laden with bullets: but he doth no hurt to the enemy by it. So one of these men may speak loud, and mouth

it with an affected fervency; but he seldom doth any great execution against sin and Satan."[1]

Thus quaintly does RICHARD BAXTER describe the spiritual futility of a ministry which is vitiated at the root by the lack of conviction. It is indeed the case that not the sincerest of preachers is personally adequate to the illustration of the Divine message he proclaims, but such inadequacy need not be fatal to his work. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," wrote the greatest of all Christian preachers, "that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of GOD, and not from ourselves." No doubt it is possible for the unfaithful preacher to twist the thought of humility into the excuse for indolence, like the false priest in SPENSER'S satire:

> To feede men's soules (quoth he) is not in man;
> For they must feed themselves, doo what we can.
> We are but charg'd to lay the meate before:
> Eate they that list, we need to doo no more.
> But GOD it is that feedes them with his grace,
> The bread of life powr'd downe from heavenly place.[2]

Lack of personal conviction is an absolute disqualification for the preacher's office, and involves the stultification of his ministry. Other

[1] *v.* Gildas Salvianus, p. 72. Orme's Edition of Baxter's Practical Works, vol. xiv.

[2] Mother Hubberd's Tale, 433–438.

factors are important, this is essential. Knowledge, for instance, would seem all but indispensable in the preacher, yet experience has shown that even an extreme ignorance, which yet coexists with genuine discipleship, need not be destructive of spiritual effect; but no degree of knowledge can make amends for absence of faith. Natural abilities and acquired attainments may be at their best, but if the flame of personal devotion be unkindled within the preacher's spirit, they will be altogether inadequate. Even a high standard of morality and immense exertions in the performance of official duty cannot compensate for the absence of that "one thing needful," nor may large popularity and all the tokens of professional success outweigh the fatal influence of personal treason, or obscure forever the completeness of spiritual failure. Perhaps there are no words of Scripture which the Christian preacher should more constantly have in his mind than those in which the Lord described the final catastrophe of insincere Christian zealots: "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out devils, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I

never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

From all this it follows that the Christian Church is not so much entitled, as imperatively required, to take every possible precaution against the intrusion of insincere men into spiritual office. It follows not less evidently that the discovery of effectual securities against religious insincerity will be extraordinarily difficult. Professions of orthodox belief are of course easily obtained, but guarantees of personal discipleship stand on another platform altogether; yet the latter is the really essential matter. In the past the Church in all its branches has mainly relied on exacting detailed evidence of sound belief. Solemn assurances of doctrinal orthodoxy have been given, and followed up by subscription of long lists of theological propositions. Omitting here any further reference to the special difficulties which attach to these lengthy denominational formularies, we must point out that the whole policy of subscription appears to imply a twofold error. On the one hand, the essential character of the Christian religion is misconceived when so much importance is attached to technical orthodoxy. On the other hand, the subtle and complex nature of man is dangerously ignored. There is no necessary connection between accurate thinking about religion, and a sincere belief in it: and no connection at all between formal

declarations of orthodox belief and genuine orthodoxy. Ecclesiastics have been slower than politicians to perceive the practical worthlessness of formal professions exacted as conditions of office. Insincerity is little likely to hesitate before any demand for dogmatic subscription, while the sensitive conscience shrinks from the public acknowledgment of beliefs which seem to have connection with secular profit. Like CORDELIA in the great tragedy the scrupulously conscientious man "cannot heave his heart into his mouth" though great consequences depend on his doing so, but remains silent while coarser spirits eagerly and volubly declare all that is required. None the less the interest of true religion demands the service of the former, not of the latter; and the Church in obstructing for the scrupulously conscientious an entrance into the official ministry sins against the very interest it exists to guard. The Christian religion is one thing; the theologies of Christendom are quite another. In confusing acceptance of theological statements with proof of discipleship the Church has gone far to defeat the very purpose of its action. Moreover, a grave question is raised by this procedure. What right has the visible Church to add to the requirements of discipleship in the case of the Christian minister? It is universally admitted that the primary and constituting element in a true vocation to the min-

istry is the inward call of the Holy Spirit; and that the function of the visible Church is limited to the testing of that vocation, not to the substitution of a new kind of vocation altogether. In determining the manner of that testing it cannot be thought that the Church is authorized to propose conditions which are properly irrelevant, or which go beyond the claim of CHRIST in the Gospel.

A distinction must, of course, be drawn between the demand for personal belief, and the requirement of adequate knowledge. It is certainly within the rights of the Church to determine the conditions of the exercise of the ministry; and of such conditions none is more practically important than insistence upon a sufficient standard of knowledge. Securities for sound morals cannot be separated from any attempt to ascertain discipleship. It may go without saying that every precaution against professional inefficiency ought to be taken. These, however, are not the points before us. We postulate the case of a sincere man persuaded that he is divinely called to the preacher's work, and on the ground of that conviction seeking from the Church the preacher's commission. What evidence of discipleship may he fairly be asked to give? What limits to his "Liberty of Prophesying" must be held to be implicit in his discipleship? What, if any, are the fixed points of Christian faith

which must be formulated in advance of the preacher's work as the conditions which are to govern his thought and colour his witness? These are the questions which are exercising the minds of serious Christians at the present time, and cannot be left outside our present discussion.

It is manifest that the problem here stated is twofold, presented on the one hand to the preacher's conscience, and, on the other hand, to the Church's discipline. His "Liberty of Prophesying" must necessarily be restrained by his loyalty to the religion; it may also be restrained, rightly or wrongly, by the authority of the Church. For the due handling of the whole question it is important to establish in general acceptance the principle that the demand of Christian discipleship is one and the same for all Christians, as well ordained preachers as laymen. This might indeed pass for a self-evident proposition, for no preacher can be more, and no layman may be less, than a disciple. The "honourable name," Christian, belongs equally to both, and must carry for both the same burden of obligation. Unhappily this manifest truth has been generally ignored by ecclesiastical authorities in the past, and is too little realized by congregations at the present time. It is not an unknown or even an infrequent occurrence, that a "heresy hunt" is raised against a preacher for teaching which the loudest of his critics know to be true;

and too often the demand is made to withdraw from the preacher a liberty which to all others is readily yielded. The folly of such action is only equalled by its injustice. How can the preacher be supposed to accept for himself as necessary truth doctrines which he may not press upon his congregation as equally necessary for them? If he be a sincere man, he must so press them: if he fail to press them, he may continue to be reckoned orthodox, but must forfeit all right to be accounted sincere. Different standards of religious knowledge of course there must be; for the preacher is in some sense an expert in sacred things, and the appointed teacher of his brethren. In exacting effective securities against disqualifying ignorance the Church is plainly within its rights. As much may be said for the severe inquisition into character and reputation, which may properly precede ordination; for the official competence of the preacher is deeply affected by his behaviour and public repute. When, however, personal belief is in question, — the quality and quantity of doctrine involved in the sincere profession of discipleship, — there can be no difference between preacher and layman. Many current controversies would, perhaps, wear a different aspect if this simple, and indeed self-evident, proposition were applied to them.

It is interesting to notice that for the most

part the Protestant churches, in taking security for the personal discipleship of those whom they admit to the preacher's office, are content with the confession of faith implicit in church membership, though, as we have already shown, they still exact in addition security for orthodox belief by means of subscription to the denominational formularies, if such exist. As might be expected, the established churches are most precise in their conditions of sacred office. In the Church of England the pledges exacted at ordination are mainly concerned with the official duties of the ministry, but the deacon, besides being required to declare his conviction that he has been "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him this office and ministry," has to profess his "unfeigned belief" of "all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament"; and the priest has to pledge himself to "be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to GOD'S word." It is a curiously vague definition of religious error, and in the divided state of Christendom somewhat absurd. The phrase, "contrary to GOD'S word," requires much elucidation before it can be of any practical use, and perhaps nothing short of an unquestioned and infallible authority will really suffice for the purpose. In all these questions, however, there is no explicit profession of per-

sonal discipleship, nor is any needed since the ceremony of ordination includes reception of the Holy Communion by the newly ordained minister. It is then as a communicant that the clergyman makes his declaration of discipleship, and owns himself bound in common with the rest of the faithful to hold the faith which is formally expressed in the sacramental Creeds.

In the Church of Scotland the custom at ordination is to question the minister in similar terms, though more searchingly in respect of doctrine, but here also his personal discipleship is rather implied than formally stated, though the question as to his motives in seeking the ministerial office comes near to a formal profession of personal Christianity. No man who is not a disciple could sincerely plead that "zeal for the honour of GOD, love to JESUS CHRIST, and desire of saving souls" were his "great motives and chief inducements to enter into the functions of the holy ministry."

The practice of the Baptist churches is thus described by an eminent Baptist minister in reply to a private inquiry of mine:

"I have never signed a creed. I made a statement of my belief when I entered the theological college; and another on the occasion of my ordination. And my experience is that of all Baptist ministers. As you know, we have 'Confessions of Faith' and historical documents:

but there is no 'subscription.' Each church forms its own Trust Deed for the holding of property; but 'Model' Trust Deeds have been formed by assemblies or associations of Baptists like the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, and the churches take them, and adopt or adapt them, as they judge right.

"The principle of our union is a common *experience* described as 'conversion,' dedication to GOD in CHRIST; avowal of discipleship to CHRIST, and the like; and the interesting historical fact is that the seven millions of Baptists in the world are characterized by a singular substantial unity of faith and practice.

"Thus there are two occasions when the theological and ecclesiastical beliefs of the ministers are subjected to something approaching to a test. The first when he enters one of the colleges; but then he has not a creed set before him to sign; he states his own belief, and the Council that controls the college determines whether or no he shall be trained for the Baptist ministry.

"The second is when he is 'ordained' or 'recognized.' On that day he makes a public avowal of the substance of the teaching he proposes to give as pastor of the church; but that statement is made after he is the accepted pastor of the church, and is made for the purpose of his 'recognition' by other churches as holding that position."

The Congregational churches, as might be expected from their history, allow the largest liberty to the individual minister, but recent experience has raised some anxiety among thoughtful Congregationalists whether the interest of vital Christian truth is sufficiently safeguarded in the novel and difficult circumstances of the time. There is no formal profession of discipleship other than that demanded at admission into the Church. In the Methodist churches the ministers do not "subscribe" any doctrinal confession, but before being admitted, and, formally, every year afterwards, the question is asked with respect to every minister, "Does he believe our doctrines?" "Our doctrines" are contained in the four volumes of WESLEY'S Sermons, and in his "Notes on the New Testament." It is evident that a doctrinal standard so loosely defined is little capable of precise enforcement, and in point of fact heresy cases in the Methodist churches are almost unknown.

From a cursory view of the prevailing systems we seem to be brought back to JEREMY TAYLOR'S conclusion that the Baptismal Confession, that is, the Apostles' Creed, is the sufficient statement of the doctrinal obligation of discipleship. The argument merits a short statement.

JEREMY TAYLOR postulates that "the act of believing propositions is not for itself, but in order to certain ends," and that consequently

"those are fundamental points, upon which we build our obedience." Taking for granted the traditional, and now discarded, notion that the Apostles' Creed was the very work of the Apostles or their contemporaries, composed "to be a rule of faith to all Christians," he infers that it must contain all necessary articles of belief." The old creed, take it in any of the old forms, is but an analysis of that which S. PAUL calls 'the word of salvation whereby we shall be saved,' viz., that 'we confess JESUS to be Lord, and that GOD raised Him from the dead.'" Then he deduces from the apostolical origin and evident character of the Creed its perpetual sufficiency: "But, if this was sufficient to bring men to heaven then, why not now? If the apostles admitted all to their communion that believed this creed, why shall we exclude any that preserve the same entire? Why is not our faith of these articles of as much efficacy for bringing us to heaven, as it was in the churches apostolical, who had guides more infallible, that might, without error, have taught them superstructures enough, if they had been necessary?" He will not allow the propriety of making even the apparently most obvious deductions from the Apostles' Creed, and imposing them as additional articles of faith. "For although whatsoever is certainly deduced from any of these articles, made already so explicit, is as certainly true, and as much to

be believed, as the article itself, because 'ex veris possunt nil nisi vera sequi': yet because it is not certain that our deductions from them are certain, and what one calls evident is so obscure to another that he believes it is false, it is the best and only safe course to rest in that explication the apostles have made." . . . "And since it is necessary to rest somewhere, lest we should run to an infinity, it is best to rest there, where the apostles and churches apostolical rested; when, not only they who are able to judge, but others who are not, are equally ascertained of the certainty and of the sufficiency of that explication." "The Church," he says, "hath power to intend our faith, but not to extend it; to make our belief more evident, but not more large and comprehensive." Even if this were not the case, charity would prohibit the Church from taking any such course, "for, by doing so, she makes the narrow way to heaven narrower, and chalks out one path more to the devil than he had before, and yet the way was broad enough, when it was at the narrowest." Accordingly he refuses to place the other and more metaphysical creeds of antiquity on the same plane of authority. They might be true, probably were true, but certainly were not necessarily so. "Therefore, they could not be in the same order of faith, nor in the same degrees of necessity to be believed with the articles apostolical."

Interesting and effective as this argument certainly is, we must admit that it has an archaic aspect, and cannot as it stands serve our turn. JEREMY TAYLOR'S reiterated insistence on the apostolical origin and authority of the Creed is rather disconcerting to all who must perforce reject the theory of its history implied in such insistence. The excellent bishop's conception of Divine Revelation was of course necessarily conditioned by the circumstances of his age, and the seventeenth century was in many important particulars different from the twentieth. The very notion of a body of doctrine, more or less extensive, committed by CHRIST to HIS Apostles, to be by them in turn handed on to the Church for jealous guardianship and faithful transmission, requires much explanation before it can be admitted by the thoughtful and instructed Christian of the present time. S. JUDE'S famous phrase, "The Faith which was once for all delivered to the Saints," has often passed on orthodox lips as, for all practical purposes, a synonym for the developed Creed of the Catholic Church, itself the authoritative formulation of the primitive deposit of unalterable and vital truth; yet we can now perceive that so understood the phrase is dangerously misleading. That original faith of discipleship was certainly not formal adhesion to any creed, but rather the acknowledgment of a saving knowledge of GOD

in CHRIST gained by personal experience. Let me illustrate this point by quoting some words from a sound and luminous work by Dr. FORREST of Edinburgh:

"The fundamental fact in Christianity is not the truths taught by CHRIST about GOD and man, but the *embodiment* which they found in HIM, the supreme and solitary character of HIS personal life. Without the acknowledgment of this as a reality in history the Gospel records are inexplicable: and the belief of it lies at the basis of all that Christianity has been to men."[1]

In these words we are, so to say, placed on the right track. In another passage the writer expresses himself thus:

"The teaching was not the ultimate thing in CHRIST. It formed but one part of HIS threefold self-revelation. Even the disciples during HIS ministry felt that behind HIS words lay a personal life of which these were no full expression, and which revealed itself in act as well as speech. And it was from the increasing perception of what this life was that they gradually reconstrued HIS sayings. The resurrection was the final demonstration to them that HIS personality constituted the center and secret of HIS message. And it had this power for them, just because it gathered up into a unity their varied

[1] *v.* "The Christ of History and of Experience," p. 466.

experiences of HIM, and completed and confirmed the dim convictions of their hearts."[1]

We are reminded that behind the belief of the Apostles lay their spiritual experience, and that this experience was both a selecting and an interpreting power.

Applied to their reminiscences of the MASTER'S earthly life, it sifted out from the mingled mass such elements as explained or illustrated the convictions about HIM to which they had been led. The process of sifting implied also an interpretation of the facts themselves, so that the history became the vehicle of spiritual truth. What the author of the Fourth Gospel says of his own method might with equal truth have been said by the other evangelists: "Many other signs did JESUS in the presence of HIS disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the SON OF GOD: and that believing ye may have life in HIS name."

Apart from the spiritual experiences which determined apostolic convictions, the evangelical history might have had another aspect, but in face of those experiences none other was possible. Those experiences, moreover, were truly representative, at least in all that went to the fashioning of religious conviction. Hence the apostolic preaching was effectual in multiplying

[1] *v.* Ibid., p. 322.

disciples.. The phenomenon of conversion has been renewed from the first age until the present time, and has resulted in the creation of the Christian society to which we belong. What is the bearing of all this on our present discussion? We can see that to endorse the apostolic version of the historical facts reveals discipleship, because it implies the existence of those very convictions which originally determined that version. It follows that the Creed is properly to be regarded as the register of beliefs based on Christian experience, verifiable afresh to every generation because the experience is continuing, and providing thus, in so far as those beliefs are verifiable, a sufficient test of personal discipleship. The Apostles' Creed, then, *in so far as it is verifiable in Christian experience*, may serve the modern Church as a test of the preacher's personal discipleship, because the honest profession of the Apostles' Creed must imply a personal experience which authenticates its religious affirmations, so far of course as they are properly capable of authentication.

Where the statements of the Creed are not capable of authentication in personal experience, they must be held to have no abiding spiritual importance, and accordingly their acceptance ought not to be insisted upon as indispensable in the Christian, whether preacher or layman. A striking passage in RICHARD HOLT HUTTON'S

suggestive Essay on "The Incarnation and Principles of Evidence" indicates both the futility of such insistence, and the reason of it:

"Every step in the history of dogmatic orthodoxy has been an effort to fortify some reliable human base for a divine infallibility — to slide in a false bottom into the abyss of Eternal Truth — to justify the exchange of the arduous duty of discriminating what GOD has told us of HIMSELF, for some such (apparently) easier duty as discriminating what a given Church or a given book *states* that HE has told us, which may be important enough on a secondary point, as shewing the drift of the earliest historical traditions, but can never be relied upon for the ultimate foundations of faith."[1]

It will be sufficiently manifest that I dissent from the mechanical conception of creeds which has recently been expressed by the ablest and most widely influential of the English bishops, and that I regard as deplorably mistaken the practical policy which has been based on it. The attempt which is being made in England to limit the "Liberty of Prophesying" by invoking the authority of the letter of the creeds is of more than local interest and importance, and I shall make no apology for directing attention to it in these lectures. In his primary charge, delivered in October, 1904, and since widely circulated

[1] *v.* "Theological Essays," p. 243.

under the title "Spiritual Efficiency," Bishop GORE, of Birmingham, has set forward, with conspicuous ability and characteristic courage, the views which I desire to combat. The charge bears directly on the subject of our present discussion, and I may with advantage make a few observations upon it. The bishop postulates bluntly that "there must be no compromise as regards the fundamental creeds." More logical and less charitable than JEREMY TAYLOR, he will exact adhesion to the literal sense of the three creeds recognized in the Prayer-book, and declared by the Articles to be "proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture." To this large demand, indeed, he admits, with curious inconsistency, a single exception. The "damnatory clauses" of the so-called Athanasian Creed are "by almost all of us" treated with laxity, which is to be severely repressed in every other application. Apart from this concession, there must be no relenting. "When the clergy, as representatives and mouthpieces of the Church, stand saying, 'I believe,' there must be no doubt that they mean what they say." Other subscriptions implying belief, such, for instance, as those by which the clergy are legally bound to the Prayer-book, the Articles, and the Scriptures, need not be interpreted with precision, but about the Creeds no ambiguity is to be tolerated. A severe literalism is to be insisted upon. He does

not hesitate to affirm, what indeed his theory logically requires, that the phrases of the Creeds do not fairly admit of more than one meaning.

"I repeat, then, that by far the most definite doctrinal requirement made upon the clergy is that involved in the continual public recitation of the creeds to which their office binds them. 'I believe that JESUS CHRIST is very GOD, of one substance with the Father, who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate'; that HE was 'born of the Virgin Mary,' and that 'the third day HE rose again from the dead'; are phrases which admit of no ambiguity. The last clauses are intended, and have always been understood, to lay all possible stress upon the events recorded having really happened. They mean that the historical records which contain the narratives of the birth and resurrection of CHRIST are true in fact. Now we are in our days challenged by a not unimportant group of men to admit the legitimacy of the recitation of these words by clergymen who, at the least, regard (for example) our LORD'S birth of a virgin, or HIS bodily resurrection, as highly doubtful. Now I say, quite deliberately, let us be very gentle with scrupulous and anxious consciences. Let us be very patient with men under the searching and, it may be, purifying trial of doubt. But when a man has once arrived at the conviction that he cannot honestly affirm

a particular article of the fundamental creed, *the meaning of which is unambiguous*, to be true, let the public conscience of the church tell him that he is not qualified to be an officer of the church which makes the public recitation of the clergymen's personal belief in these, among other, articles essential elements in its great acts of worship. What has been challenged in this matter is the public conscience. It is the public conscience which is asked to weaken the obligation of belief by consciously allowing an unreal sense of explicit words. Let the public conscience therefore reply to the challenge as explicitly as possible."

It is apparent that in all this the bishop assumes the very points in debate between himself and his opponents. He draws no distinction between those statements of the Creed which certify discipleship because they are capable of verification in an experience which creates conviction of their truth, and those which must be accepted solely on external evidence whether of Church or Scripture: he ignores the fact, which every serious student of the New Testament perforce admits, that the general trustworthiness of the sacred narratives is compatible with many minor discrepancies and some important contradictions: he assumes that the modern Church understands the phrases of the Creeds precisely in the sense intended by those who framed them,

which is notoriously not the case: finally, he takes for granted that the judge of ambiguity must be other than the clergyman himself whose personal rectitude is made to turn on the point whether or not he finds the phrases of the Creed ambiguous. The bishop proceeds to deal more directly with the clause which affirms that our LORD was born of a Virgin, assuming (what none of his opponents would admit) that the evidence for the truth of that clause is precisely identical in nature and extent with that on which the other clauses of the Creed are based. He states with dogmatic precision his personal conviction that the evidence is sufficient, and suggests that only those can differ from this view who are disqualified by prejudice from fairly judging the issue. There is of course in this the unconscious arrogance of sacerdotal infallibilism, none the less injurious for being unconscious. "It seems to me," wrote HUTTON with a touch of personal resentment, "that no theologians have done more to undermine the power of Revelation than those who have tried to force theology on men's minds by mere external authority, which has, I believe, no more capacity to influence men, without evoking in him some answering response from his own deepest nature, than a ray of light has to affect the ear or a sound to impress the retina."[1]

The main object is lost sight of when another

[1] 1 C. 248.

and properly irrelevant object is admitted. What is wanted from the preacher is a pledge of personal discipleship, not a guarantee of accurate thinking. That indispensable pledge must involve the confession of such sentiments towards CHRIST as justify, nay, compel, that worship which from the first has been offered to HIM by HIS disciples: and these sentiments can only arise as they have ever arisen from spiritual experiences which themselves affirm the apostolic tradition as to HIS person. This confession may fitly be made by a Christian boy; it cannot rightly be exceeded by the ripest Christian saint. Its character and range are not determined merely by the individual for himself; they are set forth in the apostolic writings, in which the Church has ever recognized, and must ever recognize, both the authoritative rule of faith, and the sufficient criterion of Christian discipleship. The Creeds have their value as summaries of the apostolic faith about CHRIST. Whatever change has happened in our estimate of the authority of specific articles in the Creeds does but reflect changes in our estimate of the witness which the New Testament bears to apostolic faith. We know, what former generations never suspected, that the dogma of the Virgin Birth formed no part of the original preaching of the Apostles, and we can see for ourselves that it is absent from their writings. The vital

truth of the Incarnation, on which Christianity stands or falls, is set before us by the great theologians of the apostolic age, S. PAUL and the author of the Fourth Gospel, differently indeed, but with agreement in the central postulate, that JESUS is necessarily the object of Christian worship; neither of these inspired teachers connects his doctrine with the Miraculous Birth of the INCARNATE: both never refer to it; both use language which seems difficult to reconcile with their knowledge of it. Even Bishop GORE admits that "the Virgin Birth was, and still is, not among the evidences by which faith is, in the first instance, to be generated." With the apostolic epistles before us we must add that the completest inspired expression of Christian faith omits all mention of it. Those who now maintain the dogma of the Miraculous Birth do so either on a theory of Scriptural authority which no modern student allows, and which is indeed indefensible; or on purely theological grounds, identical in character, though far superior in quality, with those which in the Roman Church have justified the allied dogmas of S. MARY'S perpetual virginity, and miraculous conception. Such theological grounds belong to the region of religious opinion, not to that of fundamental truth. Probably most orthodox Christians, if they allow themselves to consider the question at all, regard the Virgin Birth as so congruous

with a Divine Incarnation as to be hardly separable in thought. Justly persuaded that the one belief is essential, they naturally shrink from examining the other, with which it has been so closely connected. Yet justice demands that they should allow for a situation which actually exists. The difficulties now so widely felt and so frankly confessed by devout Christians have their origin not in failure of faith but in the conditions of modern thought and study. The application to the sacred writings of those historical and critical principles which now prevail over the whole area of human literature has compelled the devoutest believer, who is also a biblical student, to distinguish more carefully than his religious predecessors degrees of credibility in the primitive tradition enshrined in the New Testament, and to recognize the early intrusion of influences unfriendly to historical truth. The essential character of the primitive tradition has been unaffected, but the details and perspectives of the Gospel have been altered.

JEREMY TAYLOR'S principle, viz., that the apostolic teaching about CHRIST must be the sufficient measure of necessary truth for all time, is reaffirmed, but his identification of that teaching with the so-called Apostles' Creed is disallowed. S. PAUL'S summary of essentials is perceived to be more authoritative and less ambiguous than any creed: "If thou shalt con-

fess with thy mouth JESUS as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that GOD raised HIM from the dead, thou shalt be saved." It is perhaps worth while to refer to the careful language of the bishops assembled last summer at Lambeth. In their encyclical letter there is this admirable passage on "the Faith and modern Thought." I quote the whole passage in order to do justice to the teaching, and for its intrinsic merits.

"We turn first to the subject of our faith in relation to the thought of the present day. In humble reverence and unalterable devotion we bow before the mystery of the Trinity in Unity, revealed indeed once for all, but revealing to each generation, and not least to our own, 'new depths of the Divine.' We bow before the mystery of GOD Incarnate in the Person of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, this, too, revealed once for all, but revealing to our times with novel clearness both GOD and man, and interpreting and confirming to us all that we have hoped or dreamed concerning union between them. We reaffirm the essential place of the *historic facts* stated by the creeds in the structure of our faith. Many in our days have rashly denied the importance of these facts, but the ideas which these facts have in part generated and have always expressed, cannot be dissociated from them. Without the historic Creeds the ideas would evaporate into unsubstantial vagueness, and Christianity would be in

danger of degenerating into a nerveless altruism."

"Historic facts" are facts certified by historical evidence, not alleged facts for which historical evidence is lacking or inadequate. That the Miraculous Birth is not properly described as an "historical fact" is of course the contention of all those devout Christians who find themselves unable to affirm it: and that the phrase in the encyclical is designedly used may be inferred from the statement that "these facts have always expressed" the ideas which they have in part generated. Inasmuch as the vital "ideas" of Christianity are admittedly expressed in the apostolic writings, which yet contain no clear affirmation of the Miraculous Birth, it follows that the latter cannot be regarded as the true source or necessary expression of any essential Christian idea. I am confirmed in this persuasion by the circumstance, of which I have personal knowledge, that, at least in some dioceses of the English Church, men are ordained whose conviction of the Incarnation is confessedly consistent with doubt of the Miraculous Birth. I have dwelt at such length on the particular case of the dogma of the Virgin Birth because it is practically urgent at the present time in all the English-speaking churches, not because it exhausts the application to the Creed of the principle I have formulated.

While, then, the Church must insist on taking from the preachers whom it commissions this pledge of personal discipleship, and while the preachers themselves are solemnly bound to make that pledge the test of their own sincerity in preaching, it cannot be too much insisted upon that guarantees of accurate thinking cannot rightly or reasonably be taken. A single circumstance may suffice to demonstrate the impropriety of the attempt, and its futility. Most preachers receive their commission in early manhood, when their enthusiasm is great, but their knowledge is small, when therefore discipleship may be sincerely professed, but when opinions cannot be safely stereotyped. Subsequent reading and thought may change greatly the preacher's beliefs without in the least diminishing the genuineness of his Christian faith. What then is to be the position of a preacher whose mind with respect to the dogma of the Virgin Birth has altered, while his conviction of the truth of the Incarnation of God in Christ remains secure? Is he to be self-exiled from his ministry, anticipating the formal verdict of ecclesiastical authority by his voluntary retirement? I cannot doubt that so long as he sincerely worships God in Christ, and brings to his ministry a clear conscience, his "Liberty of Prophesying" ought not to be withdrawn on account of a perfectly innocent change of religous opinion.

The attempt to secure by preliminary pledges a guarantee of the preacher's accurate theological thinking is irrational because it presupposes that there exists a fixed standard of theological accuracy. That, indeed, was the assumption on which the ecclesiastical authorities of the past have acted, and which has transmitted to the modern church its lengthy and embarrassing theological formularies. We know, however, that theology is in continual flux. The orthodoxy of one generation is the heresy of another. Two factors combine in the fashioning of Christian theology, and one of those factors is continually changing. A Divine revelation of truth made once for all in the Person of JESUS CHRIST has to be correlated with the slowly accumulating knowledge of mankind. That knowledge is never quite the same for two successive generations. Experience always adds something, and human efforts and discoveries add still more. A rigid theology which takes no count of the changing state of human knowledge necessarily loses hold of the human mind, and becomes obsolete. Therefore, in any living church all theologies are provisional, and the attempt to bind any theology on preachers as having another character is equally irrational and unjust.

IV

OF THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE IN SERMONS

However unreasonable the doctrinal demands made upon the young preacher at his ordination may be, and however severely his Church may insist on the letter of the Creeds, he is not, in the actual circumstances of his ministry, likely to find much practical difficulty from either unless he feels himself compelled to make it for himself. So little interest is now felt in those doctrinal confessions which enshrine "the stricken theologies of the Reformation" that he will not (except in jest, which he may ignore, or in controversy, which he may avoid) be reminded of his original subscription. So vast is the range of Christian truth that, with a little care in selecting the themes of his preaching, he need not come into public conflict with any Article of the Creed. Very different, however, is his case with respect to the Bible, of which he is the official interpreter, and from which he must needs draw the materials of his regular teaching. What "Liberty of Prophesying" must the modern preacher necessarily

claim and exercise when he handles the Bible in the pulpit?

It is essential that in this discussion we should have clearly in mind the religious importance of the Bible in the scheme of Christianity as Protestants conceive it. An idea has gained ground in England of recent years, that the position formerly assigned to the Bible is excessive and untenable, implying an irrational neglect of the authority of the visible Church, and necessitating for its support irrational theories of Biblical inspiration. It seems to me that the older theory, which was expressed by CHILLINGWORTH in the memorable phrase, "The Bible is the religion of Protestants," has been rather misconceived than disproved; that, when rightly understood, it is true; that its practical abandonment by many modern Protestants has been precipitate and unfortunate, involving them in great embarrassment, and bringing them in too many cases to religious disaster. CHILLINGWORTH, of course, lived before the birth of biblical criticism in the modern sense of the phrase, and, accordingly, his great book on the "Religion of Protestants" is compromised in modern eyes by the obsolete manner in which the Bible is quoted, but, with proper allowances, his argument must be allowed to remain valid. The Bible, which in this connection means the New Testament, carries to every honest student the knowledge of the necessary truth.

This is the grand postulate of the argument. CHILLINGWORTH'S language cannot be improved upon:

"But speaking truly and properly, the Scripture is not a Judge, nor cannot be, but only a sufficient Rule, for those to judge by, that believe it to be the Word of GOD (as the Church of England and the Church of Rome both do), what they are to believe, and what they are not to believe. I say sufficiently perfect, and sufficiently intelligible in things necessary, to all that have understanding, whether they be learned or unlearned. And my reason hereof is convincing and demonstrative, because nothing is necessary to be believed but what is plainly revealed. For to say that when a place of Scripture, by reason of ambiguous terms, lies indifferent between divers senses, whereof one is true and the other is false, that GOD obliges men, under pain of damnation, not to mistake through error and human frailty, is to make GOD a tyrant; and to say that HE requires us certainly to attain that end, for the attaining whereof we have no certain means. . . . Which, whether it can consist with HIS Goodness, with HIS Wisdom, and with HIS Word, I can leave it to honest men to judge." [1]

CHILLINGWORTH was familiar with the sophistry that claims to unite reverence for the Bible with the sole right of the Church (*i.e.*, the clergy) to

[1] *v.* "Religion of Protestants," 10th ed., p. 109.

interpret it. With a side-glance at the legal tyranny of CHARLES and LAUD he writes:

"He that would usurp an absolute Lordship and Tyranny over any people, need not put himself to the trouble and difficulty of abrogating and disannulling the laws made to maintain the common liberty, for he may frustrate their intent, and compass his own design as well, if he can get the power and authority to interpret them as he pleases, and to have his interpretations and additions stand for laws; if he can rule his people by his laws, and his laws by his lawyers. So the Church of Rome, to establish her tyranny over men's consciences, needed not either to abolish or corrupt the Holy Scriptures, the pillars and supports of Christian liberty (which in regard of the numerous multitudes of copies dispersed through all places, translated into almost all languages, guarded with all solicitous care and industry, had been an impossible attempt); but the more expedite way, and therefore more likely to be successful, was to gain the opinion and esteem of the publick and authorized Interpreter of them, and the authority of adding to them what doctrine she pleased under the title of Traditions or Definitions." [1]

CHILLINGWORTH was absorbed, as were his contemporaries, with the controversy with the Roman Church, and the abiding validity of his

[1] *v.* Ibid., p. 78.

reasoning is somewhat obscured by the fact in the present day, when that controversy has become tiresome. His general argument, however, remains secure. The antithesis between Church and Bible is really false, for by the Bible is meant, when the essentials of the Christian religion are in debate, the New Testament, and the New Testament has a twofold character. It contains the documentary evidence on which the historic facts are believed; and it contains also the apostolic interpretation of those facts. In other words the characters both of Bible and Church combine in the New Testament.

Protestantism implies, then, the supremacy of the Bible, not in any irrational sense, but because the Bible contains the most authoritative version we have of the Revelation of GOD in CHRIST. Creeds are based on the Bible, and stand or fall with it. No tradition of the Church is as old and trustworthy as that which is contained in the Bible: therefore the Bible is the criterion of tradition. Any change, therefore, in the estimate of the Bible, or in the method of its interpretation, must tell on the whole system of Christian belief. That within the last half century a great change has happened in these respects will not be disputed by any well-informed observer of our society. This fact immediately concerns "the Liberty of Prophesying."

An impressive example of the older method of

handling Scripture is provided by the Scriptural references appended to the several statements of the Westminster Confession. It may fairly be presumed that references offered in support of doctrinal conclusions, which were designed to be imposed by authority and enforced by law, would be most carefully selected as unquestionably relevant and adequate. Yet these references, judged by a modern standard of relevancy and adequacy, will be found almost grotesquely defective. Take the opening chapter "of the Holy Scripture," which really contains the principle by which the whole dogmatic system set forth in the subsequent chapters must be justified. We are told that "it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself and to declare his will unto his Church: and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, *to commit the same wholly unto writing.*" This statement, of which the decisive importance will be apparent to everyone who remembers that the main issue of the Reformation really turned on the point whether or not the Scriptures did contain the whole truth of Christianity, is supported by eleven references. The first three are from the Book of Proverbs, and have clearly no bearing on the subject at all. The next two are

quotations from the well-known preface to the third synoptic Gospel, in which the evangelist explains the reason and method of his work, but says nothing whatever about either the purpose of GOD, or the authority of Scripture. Then we have the passage in the Epistle to the Romans in which S. PAUL describes the older Scriptures as "written for our learning." It obviously has no bearing on the question whether or not the Scriptures contain the whole truth of Divine Revelation, and could in no case be supposed to apply to the New Testament, which at the time was not in existence. Three references to the narrative of our LORD's Temptation follow next. These show that our SAVIOUR was wont to use the Scriptures of HIS nation for the support of HIS own spirit in temptation, and that is assuredly a fact of great religious importance, but it has nothing to do with the particular point which it is adduced to illustrate. Finally we have two verses from ISAIAH, which are not less irrelevant than the other passages referred to, and cannot possibly be held to cover the case of writings produced after the time of ISAIAH. The modern Christian would disallow every one of the proof-texts offered by the Assembly of Divines for their main postulate.

One other example must suffice. Chapter XXIII, "Of the Civil Magistrate," declares that the ruler is bound "to take order, that unity and

peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed." This teaching, taken in connection with the exalted theory of ecclesiastical independence which elsewhere finds expression in the Confession, may fairly be described as a Protestant ultramontanism. It is supported by a long array of quotations from the Old Testament, all of which would be universally allowed by modern Christians to be wholly irrelevant.

In referring to the Westminster Confession I would not be supposed to attribute to its authors any unusual degree of unreasonableness in their treatment of the Bible. They were thoroughly representative theologians. The authors of the Thirty-nine Articles were indeed too astute to give their reasons for the doctrinal judgments which they promulged; had they done so, we cannot doubt that the Anglican formulary would have been as richly adorned with misquotations of Scripture as the Presbyterian. The Prayer-book, however, can present illustrations enough. The homily in the Marriage Service, for instance, actually proposes Abraham and Sarah as ideal exponents of Christian marriage, and the long address in the Commination Service is, as a speci-

men of homiletic mosaic, a *tour de force*, but the texts of Scripture which are so skilfully dovetailed into a sonorous and moving composition are torn from the most discordant contexts and made to carry senses which nothing short of the violence of devotional exegesis could impose.

It needs no proving that the voluminous religious literature of Christendom exhibits everywhere the same method of treating the Bible. Theologians have built up their dogmatic systems on an exegesis which no modern student could accept: apologists have pressed their opponents with "proof-texts" which have lost relevance; devotional writers have taken liberties with the Scripture which cannot be justified to sound reason or to sane piety. Even at the present time the books on Religion, which have the widest popularity in the churches, are frankly non-critical; and at all times the steady influence of the spiritual classics of Christendom tells against change. Public opinion within the churches is fashioned by this popular literature, and in turn fashions the popular pulpit. It certainly is the case that the modern preacher will ordinarily receive from his congregation little encouragement in whatsoever efforts he may make to bring into harmony his critical conclusions and his Scriptural interpretations. His professional interest will often be at cross purposes with his personal rectitude, and he will be tempted to

conceal his convictions, when concealment inflicts a wound on his self-respect. The pulpit is morally a dangerous place for the man who must enter it, for (especially if he possesses what is called "the preacher's temperament") he will pass under influences, subtle, potent, and deluding, which, almost without his knowledge, will make him speak otherwise than his calm and deliberate judgment requires. The congregation acts on the preacher almost as powerfully as the preacher on the congregation. Perhaps the most weighty consideration in favour of preaching written sermons is that which arises from the relative independence of congregational influence which the manuscript ensures to the preacher. Rhetoric and sentiment, the facile response of the orator to the expectation of his audience, may conceal the moral aspect of the language they dictate, but they cannot exorcize from insincerity its degrading influence on the preacher's character.

Ten years ago the subject of "Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament" was treated in this place by one who combines the authority of an eminent critical scholar with that of a powerful and eloquent preacher. Professor GEORGE ADAM SMITH approached, but hardly crossed, the frontier of our present discussion, and in limiting himself to the case of the Old Testament he avoided the preacher's most

formidable difficulties. Yet none could have listened to those admirable lectures without feeling that the problem which they proposed is a very grave one. I cannot help thinking that we have as yet hardly realized the practical consequences of the new knowledge we perforce receive. At present the congregations, and in a less degree the preachers, are living on their capital of spiritual associations to a degree which they are far from suspecting. When those associations have lost their strength, as surely must be the fortune of all associations which are not continually renewed, still more when men have to read their Bibles without their aid, as must be the case of the future generations of Christians, can we reasonably suppose that the Bible will remain the spiritual weapon which we have known it to be? May we hope that though the old associations must perish with the theories which created them, new and not less spiritually helpful associations will gather about the Scriptures as presented to believers by modern scholars, so that in the sequel there shall be no abiding impoverishment of the Christian Church?

I am inclined to think that eminent critical scholars are in some danger of mistaking the practical problem which they are in spite of themselves raising for preachers. It is a comparatively easy task to show that the Bible as treated by the critics is more intelligible and not less interesting

than before; that a rational apology for the Christian religion is facilitated rather than embarrassed by the change: that many old difficulties are removed by historical criticism. These facts may be admitted, and yet the preacher's problem remain unsolved. How is he to make the sacred narrative the vehicle of spiritual teaching, and to find in it the storehouse of moral illustration? When we are assured that the absence of history from narratives which have hitherto been regarded as historical, and which it is extraordinarily difficult to understand otherwise, "cannot discredit the profound moral and religious truths with which they are charged," we accept the proposition with a certain reservation. On the one hand, truth is truth, whether specific historical illustrations of it can or cannot be produced from the pages of the Bible, but, on the other hand, it is hard to see how personifications can serve the purpose of examples for the guidance of individuals, and it is impossible to demonstrate truth from fictions, or commend it by "the raw material of myth and legend." Nor can I perceive the relevancy of the suggested analogy between the Scriptural narratives and modern poetry. How far has the "spiritual indebtedness," which Englishmen have acknowledged to MILTON'S "Paradise Lost," really depended on their acceptance of MILTON'S belief in the cosmogony which he borrowed from the

Bible? If the Patriarchs be mythical creations, and not historical persons, is it really possible for the preacher to offer them as examples, or to build any moral teaching on the narratives which seem to tell the story of their lives? It is suggested that there is an analogy between the parables of JESUS and the narratives of Genesis.

"As preachers," says the professor, "we cannot refuse to follow the narratives of Genesis till we refuse to follow the parables of JESUS." The phrase is ambiguous, and indeed I cannot pretend to be sure that I know what is meant by "following" the narratives and parables. Manifestly there is an important difference between the cases. The parables do not pretend to be anything else; their sole function is that of didactic instruments; and the sufficient voucher for their value as such is the character of their AUTHOR. The narratives of Genesis have hitherto owed their didactic value solely to their historicity: if the latter be destroyed, will the former survive? I cannot feel that this question is finally set at rest by the assurance that "if criticism, with the help of archæology, has failed to establish the literal truth of these stories as personal biographies, it has on the other hand displayed their utter fidelity to the characters of the peoples they reflect, and to the facts of the world and the Divine guidance in which these peoples developed." It is precisely as personal biogra-

phies that these narratives have assisted Christian men since the days when the Author of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews composed his "battle-roll of the heroes of faith," until the present time. Can they be as spiritually relevant in any other character? I must needs think that the didactic value of these narratives will not ultimately survive the belief in their historical truth, though the general recognition of the fact may be long delayed by the power of old associations. Nevertheless, in the long run, I believe the Christian preacher will be helped, and not hindered, by the change, for he will be released from a convention which, however authoritative and incidentally advantageous, is not really sound or wholesome. He will be compelled to draw the materials of moral teaching from a wider area, to recognize the operations of the Eternal Spirit elsewhere than in Israel, to draw on the inexhaustible treasury of Christian biography, to come nearer to actual life, and point his moral from the experience of his own contemporaries. It has often occurred to me when reading the appointed lessons from the Old Testament in the course of divine service that many of them are strangely ill-suited for the edification of Christian congregations when once the glamour of pious association ceases to affect the mind, and they are judged calmly on their merits. The history of the Christian Church

cannot be less edifying than that of the primitive Israelites, or the lives of Christian saints less instructive than the legendary stories of Hebrew patriarchs: it were no extravagant assumption that Christian history and biography would exhibit a marked superiority. Yet, save for the Book of the Acts, the latter are totally ignored in the public service of the Protestant churches. If the change of opinion with respect to the Bible, to which reference has been made, should have the effect of remedying this strange omission, the consequence could not but be very salutary.

Perhaps even more serious, as bearing more directly on personal religion, is the changed view of prophecy which modern criticism compels. Will it be possible for the preacher of the future to use the sublime and familiar language of ISAIAH for the comfort of individual Christians perplexed by doubt or crushed by affliction, when once those whom he addresses realize as clearly as he does himself that that language concerns the nation of Israel, and had in its author's mind no such personal reference as he would fain persuade them to read into it? Will the fifty-first Psalm be quite what it has been to Christian penitents, when once it has been definitely severed in Christian minds from any connection with individual penitence? Have not the attempts to justify the use in Christian worship of the "imprecatory" psalms, by denying their

individual reference, only had the effect of demonstrating their irrelevance without removing their impropriety? I must needs think that the consequences of the critical treatment of the Old Testament are inadequately realized by our Christian critics themselves; that they unconsciously assume that the attitude towards the Scriptures, which has been built up on the traditional hypothesis of their character and purpose, can survive when that attitude has been disallowed; that their error is facilitated and disguised by the force of associations which must grow less as time passes, and finally fade away; that both preachers and congregations are still so far under the spell of the ancient convention that they miss the significance of their own language, and are blind to the consequence of their own action. But while thus I differ from the Christian critics in holding that their work is far more revolutionary than they perceive, I have not the smallest doubt in my mind that, speaking broadly of the main current of sound criticism, and by no means identifying it with the provisional theories of individual scholars, they are true teachers of the Christian Church in our time, and that we can only disregard their teaching at the cost of culpable neglect and, so far as our ministry is concerned, of spiritual weakness. In any case, the preacher who is inwardly convinced of the truth of the "new

learning" must, at whatever cost of embarrassment and unpopularity, bring his teaching into harmony with it, and leave the consequences in the hands of that GOD of Truth who may never be served by any form of falsehood.

The case of the Old Testament, however, is comparatively simple, but what of the New? When it is argued, and, within limits which I shall presently indicate, argued rightly, that the principles of criticism which have been applied to the Old Testament cannot reasonably be refused application to the New, the difference between the two cases may easily be forgotten, and, indeed, is very often forgotten.

In the first place, the twofold character of the New Testament, to which I have already adverted, must be kept in mind, and, though each character may be separately appraised, the combination of the two must have an important bearing on the final estimate of its religious value. The Christian Church emerges on the plane of history with the New Testament in hand, and offers it as both the explanation of its existence and the register of its faith. Historical criticism has primarily to determine the facts, not to judge the soundness of faith; to appraise testimony, not to determine its spiritual significance; but this primary function cannot for the Christian student be isolated or unconditioned. The apostolic reading of the evangelical facts has its hold

on him by other titles than any which the critical study of the records can either provide or invalidate. He cannot accept any other reading of the vital facts save at the cost of self-stultification. But what, it must be asked, if the vital facts themselves are called in question?

Let it be frankly admitted that Christianity is an historical religion; that it rests on a basis of fact; that, if that basis be destroyed, it may survive as a sentiment but cannot retain its place as a living faith. There is certainly much need that this vital connection between the Christian religion and the evangelical history should be insisted upon. The notion is widely confessed and admitted that the Church, having gained possession of the inspiring ideas of Christianity, need not concern itself with the fate of the convictions which originally guaranteed them. This appears to be substantially the position taken up by the Abbé Loisy, and that section of the modernists which owns his leadership. Nothing could be more drastic than his criticism of the Gospels. His grand principle, that they are not to be regarded as works of history but as works of edification, is applied to the sacred text with such thoroughness that the whole tradition of the Saviour's Life and Teaching becomes a series of pious fictions designed to express the convictions and aspirations of the Apostolic or sub-Apostolic Church. "It seems to me," he writes,

"that the dogma of the Divinity of JESUS CHRIST has ever been and is still only a symbol more or less perfect designed to signify the relationship which unites to GOD humanity personified in JESUS."[1]

In fact so sharp is the distinction between history and faith that a positive contradiction is contemplated with equanimity. Something must be allowed for the ill effects of a Roman Catholic training, and something for the remorseless logic of the French mind. "The opinions of the critics," he writes to the Bishop of DIJON, "on the authenticity and historicity of certain Biblical writings, on the character of the narratives concerning the Infancy of JESUS, and of those which record HIS Resurrection, have no need to be influenced by any philosophy in order to be negative: it suffices to disengage them from traditional orthodoxy. If similar narratives were put forward under the same conditions with respect to any other religion founder than CHRIST, say MOHAMMED, Catholic science would speak with one voice in declaring them to be myths or legends, and you would ridicule them in your pastoral letters."[2] In these words Abbé LOISY seems to reveal the weakness of his position. Not only does he suggest a thoroughly false and misleading parallel when he brings

[1] *v.* "Quelques Lettres," p. 149.
[2] *v.* Ibid., p. 200.

together the FOUNDER of Christianity and the FOUNDER of Mohammedanism, — for while there is no "problem of MOHAMMED," there is by universal acknowledgment a "problem of JESUS," — but he mistakes the nature of the latter. It is precisely the unique combination of a belief about CHRIST which transcends the possibilities of historic proof, and a historic tradition of HIS Life which transcends all human experience, which constitutes the problem which every student of the Gospel must face. The attempt to provide a purely natural explanation of CHRIST fails because it seems to necessitate an arbitrary limitation of the historical evidence. The apostolical inferences from the evangelical facts are themselves historical evidences of great importance when the character of those facts is in question. The impression made by CHRIST on HIS followers must be accounted for, and the extraordinary persistence of HIS personal influence. To explain away the facts as the mere creatures of the faith which *ex hypothesi* they created, is a violent procedure equally repugnant to piety and to good sense. Moreover it leaves the actual problem entirely unsolved. The preacher's concern with the criticism of the New Testament is necessarily conditioned by that personal discipleship which he professed at the beginning of his ministry; which he reaffirms solemnly and publicly every time that he exercises his ministry; which

has been secretly strengthened in him by a thousand experiences, and proved in circumstances of trial and perplexity, until it bears for him sanctions too sacred for description and too powerful for doubt; which is absolutely indispensable if that ministry is not to be stricken with a fatal and sterilizing insincerity. The preacher, therefore, cannot accept critical doctrines which clearly disallow the belief about CHRIST implicit in his personal discipleship, for that were to prefer probability to certitude, and set human reasoning above Divine witness. Such acceptance would cancel the condition on which he had received the preacher's office, and would plainly draw with it the obligation of renouncing a ministry of which the postulate had been destroyed.

There is yet a further limit to the preachers acceptance of critical theories. He cannot leave out of count considerations of pastoral duty. He must keep the main purpose of his ministry steadily in view. He is not primarily concerned with the critical treatment of the sacred text, and his object is not to make of his hearers skilled exegetes and theologians. He is in the succession of the Apostles, and may adopt for himself their formula of duty. S. PAUL'S words indicate both the claims of criticism, and the limits of their recognition. "We have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of GOD deceitfully; but

by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of GOD" . . . "For we preach not ourselves, but CHRIST JESUS as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for JESUS' sake." The preacher is set to "preach CHRIST," and his supreme and dominating object is to make his hearers, in the full sense of the "honourable Name," Christians. Accordingly, he avails himself of critical theories in the pulpit only in so far as they assist his grand purpose of edification, enabling him rightly to interpret the sacred text, to clear away the doubts which are born of ignorance and misconception, to apply the Divine Gospel to the illumination and government of human life in all its functions and activities.

These two limitations — that imposed by personal discipleship, and that imposed by pastoral duty — are more easily stated than precisely defined. It is, indeed, the difficulty of determining their rightful effect that constitutes at the present time the most perplexing of all the practical questions which the Christian preacher must answer, when he determines how he shall fulfil his ministry. That he must find the answers for himself seems to be manifest. In former times, when truth was conceived of in terms of a cast-iron orthodoxy, it was easy enough to stake out by authority the limits of Christian teaching: but as we have shown sufficiently when discussing

the obligation of denominational confessions, such authoritative action is no longer possible. The attempt to control the pulpit by ecclesiastical authority breaks down before the initial difficulty of finding a standard of orthodoxy which shall both meet the practical case, and command the sanction of the general conscience. How far is the Christian preacher free to accept for himself critical conclusions which innovate on the doctrinal tradition of Christendom? How far is he morally bound to bring these conclusions into his public teaching? Where is the point of harmony between the claims of personal sincerity and those of pastoral charity to be fixed? What "reserve" in teaching is consistent with self-respect? What "liberty of prophesying" is consistent with doctrinal soundness? These are the questions, almost infinitely difficult, which the modern preacher must in the last resort answer for himself.

I am very conscious of the temerity which could not fail to attach to any attempt on the part of an individual to indicate the nature of the answers which those questions ought to receive; and in all that I am now saying, I desire to be understood to be offering suggestions rather than laying down propositions. In view of the grave importance and indeed the urgency of the subject, I think you might fairly accuse me of lack of candour if I did not carry the discussion some-

what nearer the actual issues in debate at the present time, and, so far as lies in my power, indicate what for myself I should accept as the line of personal duty.

First, then, we must clearly distinguish the limits within which historical criticism can speak with authority. Hypothesis, however plausible and attractive, is not to masquerade as demonstration. Conclusions plainly connected with the critic's *parti pris* are so far to be discounted, and only then admitted when, after due deduction has been made, they can be sustained. Let us take as an illustration a question of the greatest religious importance — the sinlessness of CHRIST. "CHRIST'S character," it has been truly said, "is the one miracle vitally important to faith. Believers could part with the physical miracles of the Gospels if science or exegesis demanded the sacrifice; but if a sinless CHRIST were taken from us on the plea that the moral order of the world knows only of imperfect men, all would be lost."[1]

This language is not excessive. The sinlessness of CHRIST is vital to Christianity. How then does the matter stand to-day, when from our modern standpoint we examine the documents? What bearing has the criticism of the evidence on the belief of the Church? We may

[1] *v.* "The Miraculous Element in the Gospels," p. 321, by Professsor A. B. BRUCE.

admit at once that sinlessness is incapable of proof; no man can read the thoughts of his fellows, nor may the most detailed testimony extend to a complete revelation of character and life. So far, therefore, we admit that our conviction that CHRIST was sinless must have other basis than that of the documents. These, however, can certainly disallow what as certainly they cannot demonstrate. The essential point is whether there is anything in the documents which disallows the conviction of the Church. On that point I apprehend the answer is equally clear and satisfactory. The most exacting criticism has left untouched the basis of our faith. Much change has been made in our estimate of CHRIST; we understand that much more of HIS teaching was shaped by the circumstances of HIS time and race than once was thought to be the case; we accept without difficulty the assurance of those who claim to know, that the teaching of the SON OF MAN included much that was already current; we are not concerned to deny that with respect to large tracts of knowledge our SAVIOUR, so far as we are able to learn, stood with HIS own generation. HIS notions about science and history and the sacred literature of HIS nation may have been, for aught we know to the contrary, as limited as those of HIS epoch. We are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews that "it behooved HIM in all things to be made like

unto His brethren," and we have no other means of knowing how far that self-surrender to human limitations proceeded than the records of the apostolic age. There is nothing sinful in unavoidable ignorance, nothing incompatible with sinlessness in the natural limitations of humanity. I have heard men object against the episodes of the Blasting of the Barren Fig-tree and of the Destruction of the Gadarene Swine; but then, who will seriously maintain in either case the historical narrative as it stands? What critical student of the Gospel does not recognize in those strange stories, so sharply distinguished from the rest of the record, precisely the presence of legendary elements which, though comparatively slight in extent within the earliest Christian documents, are unquestionably to some extent present? Historical criticism, at least, permits us to relieve Jesus Christ from the embarrassing misconceptions of His primitive biographers. Besides those episodes (which are plainly irrelevant) is there anything admittedly historic within the Gospels which implies sinfulness in Jesus Christ? Frankly, I know of nothing. We claim, then, that we have a sinless Christ; and an honest examination of the evidences certifies that there is nothing there which contradicts our claim. From that source we seek no more than that negative conclusion; we seek no more, and we require no more. The reasons of the faith by

which the negative conclusion of historical inquiry must grow into the positive affirmation of discipleship are of a higher and a firmer kind. The conscience and the heart have their place here as well as the reason; and it is the whole manifold personality which rushes forth in the cry, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

Next, I suggest that where the apostolic teaching admits of doctrinal liberty, the Christian preacher may rightly hold that discipleship admits of similar liberty now, in spite of the fact that since the apostolic age that primitive freedom has been gravely impinged upon by dogmatic restrictions. The bearings of this suggestion on recent controversies with respect to certain Articles of the Apostles' Creed is sufficiently obvious. Some of these have been well pointed out by Professor DENNY in his recent volume "*Jesus and the Gospels.*"

"There is one religion exhibited in every part of the New Testament; from beginning to end, in every writer represented in it, there is the same attitude of the soul to CHRIST. In other words, there is one faith. But though there is one faith, there is not one Christology. All the New Testament writers, it may no doubt be said, have a Christology of some kind. Faith always acts as an intellectual stimulus, and it never did so more irresistibly than in the first generation. When CHRIST constrained men to assume what

we have called the Christian attitude to Himself, HE constrained them at the same time to ask who the Person was to whom such an attitude was due. HE constrained them to think what HIS relations must be to GOD and man, and even to the universe at large, to justify the attitude HE assumed to them. But though these questions stirred more or less powerfully, as they must always do, the intelligence of Christians, it is impossible for any scientific student of the New Testament to say that all the early believers, or even all who were regarded in the Church as divinely empowered witnesses to the Gospel, answered them in the same way."[1]

Professor DENNY perceives the bearing of this on the question whether or not belief in the Virgin birth of CHRIST should be made an essential of discipleship:

"We cannot be wrong if we limit the fundamental confession of faith to the character in which JESUS presented Himself and was afterwards by His Apostles presented to the world, without introducing into it, as essential conditions or presuppositions of faith, matters of fact which originally had no such significance. The question which JESUS asks, and which is of vital importance, is, Who say ye that I am? not, How think ye that I came to be? No doubt the two questions must be related somehow, but

[1] Page 395.

happily it is possible to answer the first by assuming the Christian attitude to Christ, while the other remains in abeyance; and all that is urged here is that this ought to be recognized in the confession of the Church."[1]

It would seem difficult to deny that, with respect to the cardinal doctrine of the Resurrection, a similar distinction between the truth in which the whole Apostolic Church was at one, and the historical circumstances of the fact which that truth implied, as to which a variety of beliefs finds expression in the New Testament, ought to be recognized.

Lastly, I suggest that whatsoever liberty the preacher claims for himself he should, as a matter of conscience and duty, concede to others. It is truly a melancholy fact that those who are making on their own behalf a large demand on the tolerance of others should themselves display in their advocacy of opinions which are admittedly novel and almost necessarily unpalatable the very spirit of intolerance. Yet none can deny that this has been the case but too commonly, and that the oppression which has been inflicted on individuals has not wholly lacked excuse in their scornful dogmatism. We should never forget that beliefs which retain their hold on men who are thoughtful, educated, and devout do so by virtue of their merits, not of their defects, and,

[1] Page 405.

indeed, need no better title to other men's respect. There have been illusions which have safeguarded truth in days when an "open vision" was impossible, and kept alive the flame of Christian hope in dark times of trouble. In the mingled mass of traditional Christianity there are many protective dogmas which cannot yet be dispensed with by multitudes of the faithful. Every phase of religious development which has been traversed by the Christian Church is probably represented in a modern congregation, and no past phase of religious thought is properly obsolete. Reason and charity unite to require the preacher to think on these things, and to condition the "liberty of prophesying" which he must needs claim and exercise by a sympathetic imagination and a large tolerance.

Some words written by BISHOP LIGHTFOOT with respect to recent views of the inspiration of Scripture may well sum up our present discussion. They were addressed to ARCHBISHOP BENSON from his death-bed, and from part of the last letter which he wrote:

"There is nothing so dangerous on such a topic as the desire to make everything right and tight. I do not know whether it is that my mind is not logical, but I find that my faith suffers nothing by leaving a thousand questions open, so long as I am convinced on two or three main lines." [1]

[1] *v.* "Benson's Life," vol. II, p. 289.

V

OF RESERVE IN TEACHING, AND THE CASUISTIC PROBLEM OF THE MODERN PREACHER'S USE OF SCRIPTURE

THE frank recognition of the claims of the preacher's self-respect, and the consequent insistence on the widest "liberty of prophesying" which is compatible with a genuine discipleship, must not drive out of mind other claims, different in character and opposite in tendency, which cannot rightly be ignored by the preacher when he fulfils his solemn and difficult ministry.

"All things are lawful," wrote the apostle of Christian liberty, himself the greatest of all Christian preachers, and immediately added, "but all things are not expedient." It is indeed by no means easy to determine the extent of the limitation of lawful liberty which considerations of lawful expediency may impose, and perhaps it is not possible to do more than indicate their character in general terms. Nevertheless they are of the utmost importance alike for the individual preacher, and for those to whom he preaches, and for the Church which

has sent him to preach. This discussion would be lamentably defective if they were ignored. However great the preacher's energy of character, range of knowledge, and decisiveness of personal conviction, he cannot emancipate himself from conditions which inhere in his ministry as a teacher, or from obligations which are implicit in his Christian profession. We may distinguish and formulate four principles of the preacher's ministry which will operate as conditions of its rightful exercise, and therein as restrictions of his personal liberty.

First, the *raison d'être* of the preacher is the edification of the Church. Every procedure on his part which would have the effect of destroying or lessening the serviceableness of his ministry is by that very circumstance sufficiently condemned. Every teacher must come under this principle, and only in so far as it is respected has the right point of view from which to estimate the demands of duty been gained. Some self-suppression in the interest of his work is required from every worker, and the higher the work, the greater will be the extent of the self-suppression which will be required. In the case of the Christian preacher the obligation is most of all imperative, and the sacrifice demanded clearly greatest.

Next, no public ministry can be rightly treated as purely or even mainly an individual concern.

The preacher may never forget that he is the official exponent of the Christian religion, and the ordained officer of the Christian society. To these characters he owes much. Large opportunities of teaching, a sympathetic audience, and general respect are no mean advantages, and all are derived from them. But there is a price to be paid for these boons, and payment must be made. Grant that they may be too dearly purchased, yet no thoughtful man will question that their actual value is very great, and that nothing but a clear requirement of his own conscience could justify the preacher in refusing to pay it, and foregoing their possession.

Thirdly, every workman is more or less under the control of the material with which he is compelled to work. The religious teacher is also a workman, and subject to the common conditions of human work. He, too, must be governed by his materials. It is equally unreasonable and uncharitable to ignore the limitation of individual liberty which arises from this circumstance. The wonderful self-adaptation to specific situations which S. Paul confessed has here its moral justification. We may borrow the language in which the Apostle describes his own method of preaching in order the more effectually to affirm this aspect of the preacher's duty: "For though I was free from all men, I

brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law, to them that are without law as without law, not being without law to GOD, but under law to CHRIST, that I might gain them that without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the Gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker thereof."[1]

Fourthly, the condition of moral influence, itself the power of all didactic success, is confidence. No teacher can afford to be indifferent to the impression he makes, least of all the religious teacher. The preacher must be the vigilant critic of his own utterances, carrying himself habitually by the power of a sympathetic imagination into the position of his least intelligent and most prejudiced hearer, and realizing what sense his words must needs convey to such. Once let suspicion of the preacher's personal piety find entrance into his hearer's mind, and the door is closed against reason and persuasion. Loss of influence from neglect of this necessary prudence destroys the preacher's power of ser-

[1] 1 Corinthians ix. 19–23.

vice, and is all the greater misfortune, since it has also the character of a grave fault. "Giving no occasion of stumbling in anything, that our ministration be not blamed," is a remarkably suggestive phrase of S. Paul, and as proceeding from one who had in the eyes of his coreligionists the aspect of an arch-innovator not less remarkably impressive. "Take thought for things honourable in the sight of all men" is an admonition addressed to all Christians, but which surely has a special relevance to Christian preachers. These broad conditions of ministry cannot rightly be ignored by the most sensitively conscientious and the most nobly independent of Christian preachers, but their practical recognition is beset by many perplexities, and must at all times be closely and even severely examined. For it may conceal even from the preacher himself the influence of motives which are repugnant to reason, honour, charity, and religion. Every one of those principles lends itself with dangerous facility to the degradation of the preacher. That every teacher exists not for himself but for those whom he teaches is a sound proposition, which yet may be subtly transmuted by the teacher's timidity or ambition into justifying a complaisance disgraceful to himself and disastrous to them. That the preacher owes a measure of self-suppression to the Church which commissions, and

to the State which enables, his ministry, is a true proposition which easily passes into the apology for the most deeply degrading and the least rational of tyrannies. The claim of external authority may be pushed, and in Christian experience often has been pushed, beyond the limits of justice and religion, until the preacher becomes the facile tool of power civil and ecclesiastical. It is a matter of fact that the pulpits of Christendom have been "tuned" to the service of every interest, save that which alone they exist to serve.

It is not otherwise with the sound didactic principle that the teacher must suffer himself to be governed by the human material which he has to handle. What is the defence offered by the Roman Catholic Church for the abuses of its practical system — the polytheistic excesses of Mariolatry and saint-worship, the strange superstitions connected with purgatory, the arbitrary discipline of the confessional, the morbid devotions fostered by the crude materialism of its sacramental doctrine — but the necessity of making the teaching correspond in manner and substance to the mental state of the taught? Is it necessary to point out the facility with which the prudence, which reason and religion combine to require from the preacher who would preserve his indispensable influence over those whom he aspires to persuade, can become the

excuse for the disgraceful and calculated complaisance of the sycophant, the tuft-hunter, and the demagogue? Christendom has known but too well the parasite-preacher, whose standard of truth fluctuates with current opinion, and whose measure of success is popularity; to whom the frown of society is as the curse of GOD, and who has his appropriate and sufficient reward in its smile. Whether in the nearly obsolete type of the fashionable preacher ridiculed by THACKERAY, or in the more dangerous variety of popular divine characteristic of our own epoch, the time-server is always ready to defend his cowardly complaisance and timely silence by the plea of a just and reasonable prudence.

Keeping steadily in mind, therefore, the risk of self-delusion, the Christian preacher must accept the necessity of practising "reserve" in religious teaching. Are there any tests by which he may discern between a right and a wrong self-suppression? How shall we formulate a doctrine of "reserve" which shall not violate the preacher's self-respect, while satisfying the valid demands of his hearers?

Perhaps four notes of legitimate "reserve" in teaching may be distinguished. These affect the motive, purpose, method, and effect of the teacher's reticence. It must be conscientious, didactic, intelligent, and consistent with fundamental loyalty.

I. *Conscientious.* The preacher, when he conceals from his hearers his own convictions, and suffers them to continue in ignorance of what he himself regards as truth, must be acting conscientiously in the exercise of his teaching function. He will certainly find it requisite to criticise his motives with rigorous severity, for indolence, or timidity, or ambition may but too easily provide motives for conduct which can only be legitimate when it is conscientious. If, as indeed is the case, the very notion of didactic reserve is heavily compromised in religious minds by associations of cynical selfishness, the reason lies in the neglect of this primary condition of conscientiousness. Inevitably, the reticence dictated by the motive of ambition develops into the over-emphasis of hypocrisy. The least convinced become the most dogmatic, and the world is cursed with the portentous paradox of the persecuting sceptic. BROWNING has pointed out that consequence when he makes Bishop BLOUGRAM argue cynically:

> If once we choose belief, on all accounts
> We can't be too decisive in our faith,
> Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,
> To suit the world which gives us the good things.

II. *Didactic.* The reserve dictated by the teacher's conscience must have a didactic purpose. It will, therefore, be designedly provi-

sional and temporary. There can be no such thing as a deliberate stereotyping of ignorance; whatever acquiescence in error is admitted into the preacher's method must be honestly determined in the interest of truth. This is only another way of saying that the governing interest in the process must be that of the learner, not that of the teacher. "Reserve" is not to be used as a means of perpetuating ignorance, but of enabling knowledge. It is not a politic device for riveting the yoke of authority the more securely on the neck of the taught, but a pastoral method of guarding the immature from the risks of excessive strain. Thus the proof of legitimate "reserve" lies in the single point whether or not it tends to become permanent, and the preacher may test his own sincerity by finding out whether a calculated reticence takes a larger or a smaller place in the normal course of his teaching.

III. *Intelligent.* The preacher must seriously apply his mind to the subject as well as his conscience. The "reserve" which he practises must not only be conscientious in motive and didactic in purpose, but also rationally adapted to the actual circumstances in which his teaching ministry must be carried on. This tells in two directions. On the one hand, it compels the preacher to distinguish between his private opinions and his clear convictions, and again

between the last and convictions which have sufficient warrant in general acceptance to be reasonably pressed on others as having the august and binding character of truth. On the other hand, it requires the preacher to correlate his teaching intelligently with the mental and moral states of those whom he aspires to teach. No part of the Christian minister's duty is more difficult, and perhaps hardly any is more important, than the due correlation of pastoral methods and individual need. No two men are quite alike in character, or have precisely similar histories. Congregations are hardly less distinct; no two admit of quite the same handling. The root of most pastoral failures — apart from those which are plainly caused by the minister's wilful fault, or obvious deficiencies — lies in defective acquaintance with the human material with which pastorate is concerned. It is often maintained, not without manifest plausibility, that Protestant preachers are at great disadvantage when compared with the Roman Catholic clergy, since while the latter can study individual life and character in the confessional, the former have only their own observation and experience to draw upon. I must needs think, however, that this view is mistaken, and I should offer as sufficient proof the admitted fact — admitted I mean by all disinterested parties — that the Roman casuistry, as it was formulated and applied

by the Jesuits, has been deeply and subtly injurious to character. I attribute this result mainly to the circumstance, that casuistic science within the Roman Church has been developed under artificial conditions, pursued apart from contact with normal human life, and accordingly has always tended to a demoralizing unreality. No doubt it is the case that the Jesuits, in this respect unlike the great mediæval casuists, were not monks, but accomplished men of the world, subtlest of politicians, adroitest of courtiers. Yet they were men artificially trained for an essentially abnormal manner of life, and their casuistic laboratory was not human life as seen in the familiar contacts and activities of society, so much as the distressed and diseased version of human life exhibited in the confessional. Thus the presiding assumptions of such casuistry as that of S. Alphonsus Ligouri — to name the best known and perhaps most influential of the later casuists — appear to be excessively unfavourable to human nature. The atmosphere of the confessional is that of the sick-room, or even of the dissecting theatre, never of the open air; we do not deny that sick-rooms and dissecting theatres have their utility, if we reject both as models for ordinary arrangements for human living. "Casuistry" and the system of "direction" by which it is applied in practice, draw under control all human action, carrying

thus the methods and notions suggested by diseased and distressed humanity to the vigorous and healthy humanity of average experience. What is true of moral discipline is true also of intellectual. The principle of a sound pastorate is fidelity to nature. It is, I think, in the main a sound instinct which in the Protestant churches has made preaching a normal function and indeed the principal function of the Christian ministry. The separation of preaching from the labours and distractions of normal pastorate, and its allocation to specific individuals or "orders," who have no other official work, may be defended on many grounds. A higher standard of formal excellence is thus secured: the arts of rhetoric and the forms of reasoning are made ancillary to preaching; the academic or cloistered orator can enrich his discourses with the results of much reading and reflection; sermons take rank as a special and exalted type of literary composition. Against these advantages, however, must be set grave drawbacks, and among these, that loss of touch with the realities of life which almost inevitably marks such preaching. The preacher who is also the pastor labours under obvious difficulties, but he has this supreme advantage, that his work is part of his very life, his knowledge is never wholly severed from its practical connections, his teaching perforce takes account of the bewildering variety of conditions

and circumstances which his own experience will disclose. Perhaps it may not be superfluous to observe that preachers, whether academic or pastoral, who are also students, must reckon with the danger that their personal interest in specific studies shall disturb the balance of their judgment, and give an unwholesome and lop-sided character to their preaching. To this point we shall have to return presently; here it will suffice to point out that no preacher who seeks to determine the requirement of an intelligent "reserve" can afford to leave out of reckoning this natural and pardonable tendency to exaggeration.

IV. *Consistent with fundamental loyalty.* No "reserve" can be defensible which has the effect of prejudicing the interest which the preacher is charged to serve. That interest is not to be described solely in terms of individual and local ministry. It has a larger range, and a sublimer character. Every Christian minister, whatever may be his denominational description, receives his commission from no lower authority than that of CHRIST Himself, exercises the ministry of the whole Catholic Church, and is charged with the exposition of the Christian religion. In his devotion to the individual and local demands of his work, the preacher must not forget the larger and more fundamental aspects of his ministry. "Nil Christianum a Christiano alienum est."

He must calculate the probable effect of his reticence on the general interest of truth. If to be silent out of a legitimate deference to the prejudices of his congregation involve the defeat of a cause which he honestly believes to be the cause of Christian truth, because at a perilous juncture when all support is needed to secure victory, no help comes from a quarter whence it ought to have been forthcoming, how can the preacher be acquitted of cowardice and disloyalty? In that strenuous age of religious conflict, the seventeenth century, when honest men had to take their side and run all risks with the truth, no text was more often on the lips of preachers than that fierce cry of the Hebrew prophetess, which invoked the curse of GOD on those cautious and time-serving Israelites who at a desperate crisis of the national fortunes came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty. It may be the preacher's clear duty to cast "reserve" aside, to provoke the resentment of alarmed prejudice, to brave the suspicions of terrified ignorance, to accept with eyes open the alienation of followers, and court professional failure in the service of imperilled liberty. There is a place for chivalry in the Christian preacher's life, and in the campaigns of CHRIST there are forlorn hopes to be led.

> Great is the facile conqueror:
> Yet haply he, who, wounded sore,

> Breathless, unhorsed, all covered o'er
> With blood and sweat,
> Sinks foiled, but fighting evermore, —
> Is greater yet.

There is a solidarity of spiritual interest amid all the distinctions of sect and creed, and no fortune of truth in any part of the Christian society can be unimportant to any other. Patriotism is a sentiment which overrides local attachments, and it has its spiritual analogue in that "anxiety for all the churches," which S. PAUL confessed, and which belongs in measure to every man who stands in his pastoral succession.

It will be sufficiently apparent that the modern preacher must be no mean casuist if he is to steer a straight course between the opposite perils of undue self-assertion and disloyal self-suppression. The casuistic problem is never remote or theoretical. It confronts him every time he makes use of the Bible to prove a doctrine or illustrate an argument. A few examples will best exhibit its nature and importance. We may take two cases both familiar and both extremely difficult — the use of the Fourth Gospel, and the treatment of the evangelical eschatology.

Let us assume the not uncommon case of a preacher who is sufficiently acquainted with the protracted discussions as to the authorship and character of the Fourth Gospel to know that even the most thoroughgoing orthodoxy, provided

only it be learned, acknowledges a great embarrassment in defending the traditional views on these subjects. Let us assume further that, as the result of his reading and reflection, he is convinced that the Fourth Gospel (whether the work of the Apostle JOHN or not) cannot properly be regarded as historical; that the discourses are, on the most favourable hypothesis, an amalgam of reminiscences and interpretations which defies analysis; that the miraculous narratives are rather didactic parables than records of actual occurrences; that the picture of our LORD presented throughout is not so much drawn from life as designed to express the spiritual significance of HIS person, and to utter the spiritual truth which the author's experience had disclosed and verified. It will, I think, be admitted that such a view would pass as moderate in the critical world; that it is probable in itself; that it is weightily maintained; that it is not inconsistent with a genuine discipleship, or necessarily incompatible with an orthodox Christology: that in point of fact it is in substance accepted by many preachers of undoubted soundness in the faith. Take such a conservative estimate of the Gospel as that set forth by Dr. SANDAY in his most valuable and interesting "Morse Lectures" on "The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel" delivered at New York in the autumn of 1904, and you will find sufficient departure from the traditional

position to raise the preacher's problem which we are discussing. Of the discourses we are told that probably the evangelist "did not discriminate, or even try to discriminate," between his own words and those of CHRIST; that "there is no reason to suppose" that he would "feel obliged to ask himself whether the words which he was setting down were really spoken or not"; that "the consequence is that historical recollections and interpretative reflection, the fruit of thought and experience, have come down to us inextricably blended"; that the author's mind "has insensibly played upon" his recollections, "and shaped them, and worked up in them the fruits of his own experience." Of the miraculous narratives Dr. SANDAY speaks with a kind of reluctant candour, and with something like conscious embarrassment:

"It must be confessed that the miracles in the fourth Gospel, while in the main they run parallel to those in the synoptic Gospels, yet do appear to involve *a certain heightening of the effect.* The courtier's servant is healed from a distance; the impotent man has been thirty-and-eight years in his infirmity; the blind man who was sent to wash in the pool of Siloam had been blind from his birth; Lazarus had lain four days in the tomb. *Not only do these details imply an enhancement of the supernatural,* but it seems that the author of the Gospel valued them especially

for that reason. They fall in entirely with his purpose in writing. He sees in them so many striking illustrations of the glory of the CHRIST. *He had been himself keenly on the watch for the manifestations of that glory, and he delighted to record them in the hope that they might impress his readers as they had impressed him.*"

This passage does not seem very illuminating, or even quite consistent. To "heighten effects" and "enhance the supernatural" are only conceivable as the procedures of an eye-witness "recording" what he has seen, if we suppose that he was more eager to edify than to speak the truth. Dr. SANDAY admits the special difficulty attaching to the narrative of the raising of Lazarus, and, avoiding *more suo* any definite pronouncement, embarks on a long and embarrassed discussion of the treatment of miracle. His position is sufficiently set forth in the following passage:

"We are not called upon to believe that anything is really contrary to, or in violation of, nature. . . . We can always exercise an act of faith, that if we really knew what had taken place, and if we really knew the highest laws of the universe, there would not be any contradiction between them. As it is, there is a double margin of error: it is difficult, and in many cases impossible, for us so to translate the language of the distant past into the idiom of the present as

to be sure that we can realize what are the facts that we have to deal with; and, even if we had got the facts, we should still have but a very imperfect knowledge of the causes by which they were determined.

"We speak, therefore, not of what we know, but, as I have said, by an act of faith, of that which would be if we knew. In this attitude we make allowance for possible and probable defects in our sources; we make allowance for all the disturbing influences that have brought them into the shape in which we see them. But in doing this, we have the consolation of feeling that any element of mistake that has come in under this head has been all of the nature of *extension*. The miracles of primitive Christianity are certainly not a series of fictions. There certainly was among them a large nucleus of events that really had the character claimed for them, that were really due to the operation of a Divine cause, and really bore witness to the presence of such a cause. If there was anything beyond this of a less trustworthy character, we may be sure that it was framed on the analogy of that which is verifiable, or that would be verifiable if we possessed instruments and methods capable of dealing with it."[1]

I have quoted the whole passage in order that the author's position might be fairly presented,

[1] Page 177.

and it will be seen that he is in a quandary, unable to affirm the historicity of the miraculous narratives, and unwilling to deny it. This attitude of suspended judgment, however, does not widely commend itself to critical scholars, and is of course repugnant to the instincts of the older orthodoxy. Scholars for the most part agree in an estimate of the Fourth Gospel which excludes both apostolic authorship and historical character. Such an estimate, moreover, is from the preacher's point of view perfectly legitimate, and any preacher who adopted it would be within his rights. Nevertheless he would find the casuistic problem implicit in the use of the Gospel the more difficult. But even in so mild a version as that which Dr. SANDAY has sanctioned, the critical estimate of the Fourth Gospel places the conscientious preacher in a situation of perplexity and embarrassment. How far can he honestly assume in the pulpit that historical character in the narratives, and that Dominical authority in the discourses, which *ex hypothesi* he himself rejects? How far is he free to quote, as spoken by CHRIST Himself, words which certainly were those of the evangelist, to whom also partly or wholly must be ascribed the sense they are designed to bear? How far may he secure for his arguments a support which is greater than he himself can see that they are entitled to receive, when he allows

his hearers to ascribe the supreme authority of the LORD to proof-texts, which he knows to be only very indirectly and even doubtfully Dominical? If he conceive himself bound to a course of complete doctrinal sincerity, and attempt to indicate the precise measure of authority which he attaches to the passages he quotes, he will find himself immersed in great difficulties. How shall he avoid inflicting a deep and dangerous wound on sincere though ignorant believers, whose simple faith has fastened on the evangelist's words, and clothed them with the full authority of CHRIST? How shall he make sure that his confessed departure from the immemorial tradition of the Christian Church will not be interpreted as the token of an unconfessed departure from the Christian faith itself? May he not in his endeavour to be perfectly sincere make sad the LORD'S people, whom he is commissioned to comfort, and put weapons in the hands of the LORD'S adversaries, whom he is charged to rebuke? These questions are impossible to avoid, and infinitely difficult to answer. The preacher will not lack persuasive inducements to a safer course, yet even so he will not escape from his embarrassment. If, listening to the suggestions of pastoral charity and professional caution, he permit himself to adopt conventional modes of speech, and to quote the Gospel in the accustomed way, how is he to

avoid a disabling sense of insincerity, or escape the risk of alienating by his apparent lack of candour those of his hearers who are educated and perplexed? Shall he take refuge in the fact that, whatever may be the precise relation of the Johannine discourses to CHRIST, they are the oldest, most authoritative, and most illuminating commentaries on HIS teaching which the Church possesses, and base on it the assurance that no spiritual mischief can really come from leaving undisturbed the conviction, that those discourses are in letter and form what they certainly are in general effect, the SAVIOUR'S message of truth? There are, perhaps, two answers which may be returned to this question. On the one hand, it may be urged that to clothe the commentary with the authority of the text is really to make essential to discipleship a specific Christology — for the Johannine discourses are the careful elaboration of a specific Christology — and thereby to misconceive dangerously the very nature of discipleship. On the other hand, it may be argued that grave risks to faith are latent in every religious procedure, which, however innocent in design and apparently expedient, really implies a measure of duplicity. Sooner or later men come to know that they had been permitted to continue in error by those whom they had accepted as their spiritual guides; they find themselves indebted

to others for information which they justly consider they were entitled to receive; an universal suspicion invades the resentful mind of the disillusioned disciple, and a transition, which might have been traversed with no greater loss than that of a few pious opinions, becomes the occasion of the forfeiture of the whole capital of faith. One circumstance there is, indeed, which ought to clear the preacher's mind, and make plain the path of his duty. If an attempt should be made, in the case of others more candid or less cautious than himself, to suppress by the strong hand of authority the exercise of a doctrinal liberty, which he must needs insist upon, he can have no doubt as to his action. He must seek no evasion of responsibility, and make no concealment of personal belief. At all hazards he must speak out, and take the side of imperilled freedom.

The casuistic problem of the preacher's duty is not less perplexing if we take the case of the evangelical eschatology. I need not point out that nowhere have the traditional beliefs been more remarkably altered. We know that the eschatology of the New Testament stands in the closest relation with current Jewish beliefs, and receives remarkable illustration from that strange apocalyptic literature, which the learning and industry of Dr. CHARLES have made familiar to the English-speaking student. More-

over, we perceive that the New Testament does not contain a complete, or even a consistent, doctrine. The student must distinguish between the teaching of the synoptics and that of the fourth evangelist; between different phases of the Pauline doctrine; between S. PAUL'S teaching and that of the Apocalypse. It is hard to discriminate between the different elements of the evangelical tradition. It is all, of course, ascribed to our LORD, but some of it is clearly to be attributed to the evangelists; some expresses the beliefs and expectations of the apostolic church; some may be borrowed from non-Christian sources. We cannot forget that on the crucial question of the nature and time of the Parousia, the Apostles were mistaken; and we evidently must seek for the truth through the difficult medium of symbolism. All these circumstances contribute to the preacher's embarrassment when he handles the great theme. There is no part of the Christian scheme which has taken a deeper hold on the conscience and imagination of Christendom, and the religious convictions of average folk are most intimately bound up with a materialistic literalism, intolerable to the scholar. It is sufficient to allude to the popular hymns which treat of the "Four Last Things." They are so many paraphrases of the Apocalyptic symbolic descriptions, conceived of as literal occurrences. Mediævalism

has in this sphere never lost its hold over us. The "Dies Iræ," perhaps the noblest utterance of mediæval piety, is still sung in our churches. It is nothing but the description of the Apocalyptist drawn out in detail, pointed with a personal reference, and suffused with the mediæval spirit of intense terror. Christian sentiment has clothed with alluring beauty notions of intolerable crudeness. I am tempted to quote a passage from CARDINAL NEWMAN'S sermon on the resurrection of the body:

"We cannot determine in what exact sense our bodies will be on the Resurrection the same as they are at present, but we cannot harm ourselves by taking GOD'S declaration simply, and acting upon it. And it is as believing this comfortable truth that the Christian Church put aside that old irreverence of the funeral pile, and consecrated the ground for the reception of the saints that sleep. We deposit our departed friends calmly and thoughtfully in faith; not ceasing to love or remember that which once lived among us, but marking the place where it lies, as believing that GOD has set His seal upon it, and His Angels guard it. His Angels, surely, guard the bodies of His servants; Michael the Archangel, thinking it no unworthy task to preserve them from the powers of evil. Especially those like Moses who fall 'in the wilderness of the people,' whose duty has called them to duty and suffering,

and who die a violent death, these, too, if they have eaten of that incorruptible bread [*i.e.*, the Eucharist], are preserved safe till the last day. There are, who have not the comfort of a peaceful burial. They die in battle, or on the sea, or in strange lands, or as the early believers, under the hands of persecutors. Horrible tortures, or the mouths of wild beasts, have e'er now dishonoured the sacred bodies of those who had fed upon CHRIST; and diseases corrupt them still. This is Satan's work, the expiring efforts of his fury, after his overthrow by CHRIST. Still, as far as we can see, we repair these insults of our enemy, and tend honourably and piously those tabernacles in which CHRIST has dwelt. And in this view, what a venerable and fearful place is a church, in and around which the dead are deposited! Truly it is chiefly sacred as being the spot where GOD has for ages manifested Himself to His servants; but add to this the thought, that it is the actual resting-place of those very servants, through successive times, who still live unto Him. The dust around us will one day become animate. We may ourselves be dead long before, and not see it. We ourselves may elsewhere be buried, and should it be our exceeding blessedness to rise to life eternal, we may rise in other places, far in the east or west. But, as GOD'S word is sure, what is sown is raised; the earth to earth, ashes to ashes,

dust to dust, shall become glory to glory, and life to the living GOD, and a true incorruptible image of the spirit made perfect. Here the saints sleep, here they shall rise. A great sight will a Christian country then be, if earth remains what it is; when holy places pour out the worshippers who have for generations kept vigil therein, waiting through the long night for the bright coming of CHRIST! And if this be so, what pious composed thought should be ours when we enter churches! GOD indeed is everywhere, and His Angels go to and fro; yet can they be more worthily employed in their condescending care of man, than where good men sleep? In the service of the Communion we magnify GOD together with Angels and Archangels, and all the company of heaven. Surely there is more meaning in this than we know of; what a 'dreadful' place would this appear if our eyes were opened as those of Elisha's servant! 'This is none other than the house of GOD, and this is the gate of heaven.'"[1]

The felicitous choice of words may easily conceal the strange crudity of the notions sacramental and eschatological which they express; yet a little reflection will soon make evident how exceedingly crude those notions are. NEWMAN, in spite of his subtle and powerful intellect, thought and wrote on these subjects with the naïve simplicity of a mediæval monk. The

[1] "Parochial Sermons," vol. I, p. 321.

masses of Protestant Christians are still intensely and intractably materialistic in their eschatological beliefs; and the serious aspect of the fact is that which shows these materialistic beliefs associated so closely as to appear inseparable with the fundamental truths of moral responsibility, of Divine self-vindication in Judgment, of the inexorable perdition which follows on persistent sin, of the final triumph of righteousness. These fundamental truths it is the first duty of the preacher to insist upon, to defend, to sever from compromising connexions with materialism, to apply to the conditions of individual lives. How shall he so handle the sacred text as to disallow the literalism which has built on it such an immense fabric of materialistic dogma, and not in the process to weaken its hold on the minds of men? The mere attempt is full of risk, for here the prejudices of religious people are fiercest and most intractable. I have selected the cases of the Fourth Gospel and the evangelical eschatology because they will be within the experience of most preachers, not because they are in any special sense more perplexing than other cases which might be suggested. Enough has been said to make clear the nature and the gravity of the casuistic problem of the preacher's use of the Bible in the circumstances of our time. It is indeed comparatively easy to ignore that problem, to prefer

professional success to the risks and toils of conflict, to appeal to the devotional sentiments of congregations which are still for the most part unconscious of the religious revolution which is in progress around them, to avoid by self-immersion in irrelevant activities, social and political, the necessity of awaking the fears and rebuking the prejudices of intense but ignorant piety. These are no easy times for Christian preachers. We are still only at the beginning of the great transition out of mediævalism, and there lies before us a long and troubled interval of theological disintegration before a satisfactory and lasting reconstruction of Christian belief can be effected. Let no man think that the historic method of spiritual progress has changed. The cause of truth has never yet prevailed without martyrdoms, and these cannot be wanting now. On the sincerity and courage of Christian preachers much depends — the help of distressed souls drifting from the old doctrinal moorings over a dark and trackless ocean and beginning to despair of any anchorage for faith; the faithful teaching of the congregations, patiently, tactfully, faithfully, in spite of suspicion and abuse; above all, the resolute determination never to be driven by the violence of bigotry within the Church, or the force of secular enthusiasm without, into accepting a separation of CHRIST'S religion from the central stream of

human progress. In urging that unnatural severance the ultramontane and the secularist join hands, and they can count on the blinding influences of religious panic and prejudice. Between them and their sterilizing victory stands the Christian preacher, "not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of GOD deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of GOD."

VI

OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PREACHING

HITHERTO we have dealt only with the strictly professional aspects of the preacher's duty as the authorized exponent of the Christian religion, and the interpreter (in that capacity) of the Scriptures. We have considered the restrictions on didactic liberty which may fairly be thought to be involved in his own discipleship, in the necessary requirements of the Church from which he has received his pastoral commission, in the legitimate claims of the congregation to which he ministers, in the very conditions of successful teaching. Now we must take into reckoning another and less professional aspect of the preacher's ministry, that in which he appears as a citizen possessed by reason of his office of exceptionally great opportunities for forming public opinion on debated questions which are not necessarily or obviously within the range of his official duty. Economic, social, and political questions are keenly debated in every community which is both civilized and free, and the Christian clergy cannot ignore them. Three

cogent reasons combine to compel the most reluctant preacher to inquire what his personal obligation may be. First, as a Christian man whose action is clothed with a certain exemplary significance beyond that of the ordinary Christian, he must determine his own social and political action; next, as a Christian teacher, he cannot ignore the intimate and indeed vital connection between religious convictions and the secular procedures through which they must find expression: finally, as a Christian citizen set in public place and thereby enabled to help or hinder conspicuously the cause of social righteousness, he cannot absolve himself from responsibility for the use or disuse of his exceptional opportunities. In this triple character, as Christian men, as Christian teachers, and as prominent Christian citizens, the clergy of the Christian Churches are driven to consider the difficult and exasperating questions which agitate the society to which they are commissioned in CHRIST'S Name. What is the bearing of all this on their preaching? How far may they give free expression in the pulpit to their personal opinions on the burning questions of economics and politics? Ought they to hold their peace in the midst of public perplexity and excitement, and repudiate for themselves the liberty of speech which every other citizen possesses? Is self-suppression or self-expression the Christian preacher's duty?

It is important to observe that the situation in these respects also is novel. Christian history hardly offers precedents for our guidance, for in the past, though there has been abundance of political preaching, it has always been either inspired or authoritative. There have been prophets speaking by the title of an immediate and recognized inspiration; and there have been ordained exponents of public policies, speaking in the name of civil or ecclesiastical Government, as the case may be. The formula of the priest, "Thus saith the Church," has replaced the older formula of the prophet, "Thus saith the LORD." The formula of Protestant nationalism, "Thus saith the King, or the State, or the Law," is really only a variation of the priestly formula, implying indeed a different conception of the Church, but not affecting the authoritative or official character of the teaching thus introduced. The Protestant reformers stood in a somewhat ambiguous position. They had no immediate or recognized inspiration to appeal to; and at least in the earlier phases of the Reformation they were in open revolt against the authority both of Church and State. In appealing to the Bible they commonly imagined themselves to be appealing to a Divine and infallible authority, but even with respect to purely spiritual matters their appeal was really to the conscience and the reason of mankind. Their own private

judgment indeed could determine the meaning they placed on the sacred text, and thus fashion the message which they preached, but they could only win for that message the acceptance of others by securing for it the approbation of their private judgment also. The true nature of their appeal, however, was obscured so long as the Bible was universally believed to express the Divine Will in economics and politics as well as in religion. The preacher with his schedule of proof-texts faced his hearers with a quasi-prophetic authority, and, indeed, commonly imagined himself the true successor of the ancient Prophets. He claimed for his political doctrines the august character of Divine revelations, and clothed his private opinions with the awful authority of religious truth. As soon, however, as this estimate of Scripture failed to command acceptance, the preacher was seen to have no better credentials as a politician or an economist than the rest of men; his opinions might be uttered in the solemn phraseology of the pulpit, but they remained his opinions still; and their valid claim on other men's acceptance was solely determined by their intrinsic reasonableness.

Moreover, it would be both uncandid and unreasonable to ignore the fact, to which on every page the history of Christendom bears witness, that no sincerity of conviction avails to exempt the Christian minister from the dominion of class

prejudices and class ideals. The ordained aristocrat may borrow from his profession the modes by which he expresses his political opinions, but the opinions themselves will ordinarily be those of his class. Middle-class individualism will reflect itself in the social and political attitude of the middle-class clergyman. Peasants in orders will utter the aspirations and echo the prejudices of the peasantry. The influence of social type is discernible even in the Prophets and Apostles. Amos the peasant is a peasant still when he speaks in the Name of the Lord; that is, he realizes most vividly the bearings of the Divine Message on the circumstances of his own class. Isaiah, the kinsman of kings, has the "grand manner" of the court. Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesy in the tone and manner of the priestly class from which they sprang. Similarly, the large tolerance and wide-ranging plans of S. Paul are not unconnected with the fact that of all the Apostles he alone was a Roman citizen, by birth a gentleman and by education a scholar. The rugged morality of the Galilean peasant is displayed in the Epistle of S. James, and the fierce nationalism of a Palestinian Jew receives Christian forms on the lips of the Apocalyptic seer. Christian experience, repeated again and again, certifies the correspondence between the social and political attitude of Christian ministers and their class types. This fact again stands

in evident connection with another, not less certain and perhaps even more important. As soon as the conditions of Christian life became normal, that is, after the "other worldly" fervours of the first age and the distractions of chronic persecution had passed away, the clergy have tended to attach themselves to the dominant political force of their time. Accordingly their advocacy has been at the service of the most diverse political systems, and they have consecrated with their benedictions the most opposite social ideals. The Roman Empire, the feudal order, the national monarchies, the reign of commercialism — each in succession has fashioned the Christian ministry to its will; and if at present there is a disposition visible in every branch of the Church to attach the clergy to the advocacy of extreme democratic views, we cannot reasonably disconnect it from the fact, that the working classes are everywhere becoming the dominant political force of our time. Both these considerations — the persistence and fashioning power of class types on the one hand, and the parasitic attitude of the clergy towards political force on the other — ought to be present in our minds when we set ourselves to the difficult task of determining the rightful action of the modern preacher with respect to the social and political conflicts of his own age. At least there is a chastening preliminary process to which he must

subject himself before he takes up his parable on the vexed questions of politics. He must make his own personal equation, and issue to the public the expurgated edition of his opinions.

There are besides some other considerations which must not be omitted. Before appealing to the precedents of history, and invoking them in justification of his action, the modern preacher should at least realize the changes which have taken place in the social position of the clergy, and in the political importance of the pulpit. In his remarkably suggestive little treatise "*On the Constitution of the Church and State according to the Idea of each*," the philosopher COLERIDGE has described in no exaggerated terms the older significance of the clergy in the scheme of the national life:

"This class comprised the learned of all denominations, the professors of all those arts and sciences, the possession and application of which constitute the civilization of a country. Theology formed only a part of the objects of a national Church. The theologians took the lead, indeed, and deservedly so; — not because they were priests, but because under the name of theology were contained the study of languages, history, logic, ethics, and a philosophy of ideas; because the science of theology itself was the root of the knowledges that civilize man, and gave unity and the circulating sap of life to all other sciences;

and because under the same name were comprised all the main aids, instruments, and materials of national education. Accordingly, a certain small portion of the functionaries of the Clerisy were to remain at the fountain heads of the humanities, cultivating and enlarging the knowledge already possessed, watching over the interest of physical and moral science, and the instructors of all the remaining more numerous classes of the order. These last were to be distributed throughout the country, so as not to leave even the smallest integral division without a resident guide, guardian, and teacher, diffusing through the whole community the knowledge indispensable for the understanding of its rights, and for the performance of its correspondent duties." [1]

COLERIDGE clearly had in mind mediæval conditions, but his words retained a considerable element of truth long after the Reformation. In the seventeenth century, the golden age of Puritan preaching, the political importance of the English clergy must have been very considerable. The greatest part of all learning in the nation was found in the ranks of the clergy. The clerical profession was the most numerous and the most influential of all the professions. It was still no unusual thing for the greater political offices to be entrusted to the higher ecclesiastics. Bishop WILLIAMS was Lord Keeper: his rival,

[1] *v.* p. 14.

Archbisop LAUD, was for years practically the first minister of the Crown; Bishop JUXON was Lord Treasurer. The action of the seven bishops in JAMES II's reign was felt to have a decisive effect on the political situation. Religion was unquestionably the highest concern of the nation, and its due organization was the principal concern of a Christian government. The very notion of a non-religious citizen was abhorrent and almost inconceivable. Intolerance was, of course, the characteristic of the time. All parties found common ground in the assumption that error must be suppressed with the strong hand of a Christian state. A few persecuted sectaries might formulate the principle of toleration, or a latitudinarian thinker might play with the notion, but mainly all were agreed in the right and duty of persecution. Now the moral justification of religious persecution is the assumption that theological error draws in its train social and political mischiefs so grave, that the manifest evils of suppression are comparatively trivial. The importance attached by the state to the religion of the people affected the preacher's duty indirectly by ensuring for his preaching the audience of the immoral and the irreligious. It is interesting to remember that the number of communicants in the Church of England at the beginning of JAMES I's reign was almost exactly the same as it is now, although in the three centuries which

have intervened the population has multiplied sevenfold. At the earlier period, owing to the action of the state, the whole population was brought to Communion. Inevitably in such circumstances the social and political importance of the clergy was very great. Sermons were the ordinary vehicles of political information, and preachers were the recognized exponents of public policy. Education was limited: the mass of the people were unable to read or write; the parish church was commonly the only place of public meeting in the parish; and that was the freest discussion of political questions which they heard from the pulpit. The noisy interruptions to which preachers were exposed, as the congregation expressed audibly its dissent from or agreement with the opinions it heard, were natural consequences of the frankly political character of the sermons. Absence of provocations to excitement on the part of the preacher is the condition of that decorousness of modern congregations which is in our eyes so seemly and natural. When church attendance was compulsory, either by statute or by the iron coercion of public opinion, the preacher could be reasonably sure that whatever malpractices called for public rebuke were represented in the congregation by the responsible parties. Accordingly his denunciations of sin had a fitness and relevancy which could not possibly have attached to them in the absence of

the offenders against whom they were primarily directed. It is too commonly the case with the modern preacher that he thunders at the social faults of absentees, a process which manifestly can be of little service to them, and may well be as unwholesome as it must be irrelevant for the actual hearers.

All these considerations lead to the conclusion that the modern preacher will not find much trustworthy guidance from the precedents of Christian history, and may be dangerously misled by them. He must face the problem of his duty for himself, and determine his course as best he may in view of the situation which actually confronts him. In that situation three salient features disclose themselves.

In the first place, there is the extreme complexity of economic and social questions, a complexity which disallows the bold intuitions and sweeping methods of the enthusiastic amateur, and demands the patient labour and cautious experiment of the scientific expert. That clergyman is an immodest as well as an imprudent man who does not perceive the importance of this, and its bearing on his conception of duty. He cannot ordinarily be more than an amateur in point of economic knowledge, and he has no moral right, therefore, to speak on economic subjects with the authority of an expert, yet, if he speak at all on such subjects from the pulpit, he

cannot avoid making some claim to speak with authority. It has been urged that, however defective the preacher's equipment of technical knowledge may be, his pastoral experience will in many cases bring him special and most valuable knowledge of another kind, which will more than make amends for his economic deficiencies. Here, perhaps, we may detect a fallacy. The experience of the pastor, as he fulfils his duty year in and year out in the homes of the people, will certainly bring him face to face with the lamentable consequences of economic dislocation and moral wrong; and so far he will be qualified to speak of the social problem with the power of personal knowledge, and with the moving insistence of personal conviction. He will be an excellent witness before a Commission of Inquiry; and, if the state of public opinion be apathetic, and the public conscience be unmoved, he will be able to bring both to a healthier state by public protests which glow with the passion of righteous anger. Neither knowledge of the extent of social evils, however, nor the most intense desire to remedy them, is equivalent to a true estimate of their causes and conditions, or a clear view as to the means of removing them. It must be added, that so far is the former from being identical with the latter, that the two may even be in conflict. The pastor's experience may even disqualify the preacher for the rôle of a social

reformer, disturbing the balance of his judgment by the vehemence of the sentiments it creates, and indisposing him to accept those patient and tentative procedures which yet are the indispensable methods of any sound and lasting reformation. It would be easy to collect from the history of Christian philanthropy examples of the lamentable consequences which have followed reforming legislation dictated by religious enthusiasm unchecked by knowledge. In no sphere is the old adage about the wise existing to remedy the blunders of the good more impressively illustrated. Preachers have no creditable record as social reformers, and for this very reason, that they, beyond other men, are disposed to make sincerity of conviction and strength of feeling take the place of knowledge and prudence.

In the next place, the modern preacher cannot be blind to the fact that there is no longer the old justification for his interference in secular politics. The cause of social and economic reformation has now taken its place in the forefront of public interest, and it may safely be assumed that in the future it will hold a commanding position in the programmes of political parties. It is mere affectation to pretend that the advocacy of social change in the interest of the poorer classes will expose any politician to public odium or professional loss, always provided that the change be in itself consonant with reason and

justice. It would be truer to say, that no shorter cut to popularity lies open to the aspiring politician than that offered by a policy of social amelioration. Political extinction is the recompense of an unsympathetic attitude towards working-class ideals. From all this it results that social reform has definitely moved into the area of party politics. Every specific project of change is a plank in the platform of a party, and its public advocacy necessarily carries the suggestion of political partisanship. The preacher has to remember, not only that there is no longer any real need for his efforts in the pulpit to recommend a cause which, in principle, is approved by all political parties, but also, that any efforts he may make will inevitably be discounted as the product, not of a disinterested zeal for righteousness, but of the prosaic and familiar temper of partisanship. The applause which the modern preacher receives when he makes his pulpit the ally and adjunct of the political platform is really dictated by the gratitude of partisans, not by the approval of religious men, or at least, since human hearts are fertile in self-delusion and human motives are subtly mingled, the one sentiment is dangerously confounded with the other.

In the third place, the preacher cannot shut his eyes to that materialistic tendency which the new zeal for social improvement at once reveals and stimulates. It is not, of course, to be ques-

tioned that there are other and nobler elements in modern secularism, but no man who knows anything of human nature, or has any acquaintance with the aims, methods, and literature of the secularist movement, can have the smallest doubt that, along with the altruistic enthusiasm of individuals, and the rightful aspirations of classes, there are at work the sinister forces of materialistic appetite and vulgar covetousness. The atmosphere of the twentieth century is secularist, and it is affecting human thought and action at every point. In a remarkable sermon recently preached to the undergraduates of Oxford, Professor INGE has called attention to "the acute secularizing of the Christian hope as shown by the practical disappearance of 'the other world' from the sermons and writings of those who are most in touch with the thought and aspirations of our contemporaries." In a passage of great power and beauty he shows how extreme a contradiction of the Christian attitude is implied in this change:

"The Gospel has never been so preached before. From the time of the first martyrs to our own day the Christian has always felt that this world is not his home. His eyes have been fixed on the curtain which hangs between us and the Beyond, through which, as he believed, stream forth broken rays of a purer light than ever came from the sun. In all the changes and chances

of mortal life he has looked for the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD. He has enriched his mental pictures of this glorious home with all the fairest and noblest images that he could find in the world of time and space, and he has prayed every day that he may at last be admitted to the never-ending companionship of saints and angels in that eternal world, and to the beatific vision of GOD Himself, Whom those only can see who have been made like Him in holiness. And along with these hopes he has been haunted by the horror of perpetual exile from the presence of GOD — a doom so dreadful that not even by recalling all the ingenuities of human cruelty can we realize one tithe of the suffering that the soul must endure when it knows what it has lost. However pictured, the eternal world has been hitherto for Christians the real world. The only reality which belongs to this present life lies in the mysterious fact that temporal acts have eternal issues — that the purposes of GOD and the irrevocable destiny of men and women are being worked out on this shifting stage."

This conception of Christianity is shown to be beyond all question that which JESUS CHRIST Himself requires:

"The essence of Christianity is a transvaluation of all values in the light of our Divine sonship and heavenly citizenship. The first Chris-

tians were accused of turning the world upside down; and this is just what the teaching of CHRIST does if the average man sees the world right side up. The things that are seen are temporal, fugitive, relatively unreal; the things that are not seen are eternal, real in their changeless activity and inexhaustible fulness of meaning. Our SAVIOUR lived Himself in the presence of these timeless realities — and, so living, He knew that the only thing that matters in this world is the life or soul, which is here on its trial, passing through its earthly pilgrimage towards weal or woe."[1]

This position, of course, easily lends itself to the distortion of asceticism, but it is not really ascetic. The fallacy of historic asceticism was the assumption, drawn from no Christian source, that the saving discipline of the soul involved the repudiation, so far as was possible, of secular interests and relationships; its truth, that which gave it so tenacious a hold on the minds of good men, lay in its emphatic assertion of the intrinsic superiority and abiding character of the soul's life. We have done for ever with the fallacy: let us take care that we do not let slip the truth. In affirming the validity of temporal interests and relationships let us be sure that we maintain their subordination to the concerns of the Spirit. Religion, the Religion of the Incarnation preëminently, must reveal itself as the principle of moral

[1] *v.* "Guardian," November 18, 1908.

discipline, and the power of moral independence. The Christian preacher cannot ignore this when he seeks to determine his duty. He must take care that the primary purpose of his ministry be not obscured or defeated by aspects of it which are secondary and accidental. When all is said, what *is* the true métier of the Christian preacher? Is it not precisely the jealous wardship and faithful proclamation of those higher truths of the spiritual life which, just because they are indeed such, are ever threatened by the nearer and more insistent claims of the secular life? Must not the preacher's distinctive contribution to the final solving of the social problem be found in his steady witness, in season and out of season, by word and by example, to the sovereignty of the Spirit over the Flesh, of the eternal life over the life temporal, of the other world over the world present? Is he not set to hold social reformers back from the sin which most easily besets them, to keep before them the too easily forgotten truth that "not without celestial observations can even terrestrial charts be accurately constructed"? And can he reasonably hope to do this if he descends into the arena of political conflict, and faces men in the suspected character of a partisan?

Here I shall certainly be met by two objections. First, it will be urged that, whatever may be the right course in theory, in practice the preacher

will be unable to abstain from active association with politics save at the prohibitive cost of his public influence. Is it indeed reasonable to suppose that he will command the attention of serious citizens, when he gives them to understand that, on the very subjects about which they feel most strongly, and with respect to which their religious principles cannot but be directly concerned, he has no advice or encouragement to offer? Does not an unavoidable dilemma confront the modern preacher? On the one hand, loyalty to the severely spiritual conception of ministry involving loss of touch with his hearers, and perhaps their total alienation; on the other hand, frank acceptance of political responsibility involving the discredit of partisanship — that is the choice, a choice between loss of influence and lowering of influence.

Next it will be claimed that in point of fact situations arise in which abstention from an active advocacy of a given policy is itself equivalent to active opposition. Such an issue as that which confronted the American clergy half a century ago is an illustration which will immediately rise to mind. Was PHILLIPS BROOKS mistaken when he held "that it was the duty of the Church and of a Christian minister to sustain, by sympathy, by act, and spoken word, the government of the country struggling in mortal throes"?[1]

[1] *v.* "Life," vol. I, p. 424.

It must of course be admitted that the preacher who in times of political excitement declines to be swept along by the current of opinion prevailing in his congregation, will run no slight risk of forfeiting whatever popularity he may have acquired, and, if spiritual influence be measured by popularity, he will impair his spiritual influence. The inducements to political partisanship will sometimes be very strong, and they will by no means always address themselves to the weaker elements of the preacher's character. No mean qualities of character and intellect will be needed in the man, who will vindicate the true independence of his pulpit against the impetuous force of denominational or congregational opinion, or the more subtle pressure of his own personal conviction. We need not wonder that in many churches, especially those which are organized on the voluntary principle, the coercion brought to bear on ministers is very great, often too great for their self-respect and ministerial duty. Any candid observer of religious life in England would, I think, recognize in the political partisanship of the Nonconformist clergy a fertile source of spiritual weakness. I know, of course, that there are historical extenuations which can be pleaded. The long conflict for the rights of citizenship against the steady opposition of the Established Church has had effect in associating religion and party politics

so closely together that their separation has appeared unnatural; but now that the reasons for that association have ceased to exist, the fact survives to the grave injury of religion. It must also be admitted that mere abstinence from polemical language in the pulpit will not of itself suffice to demonstrate the spiritual independence of the preaching. Reticence in the sermon may go along with the reputation of partisanship; and there are occasions when, in the very interest of independence, reticence should be abandoned. There is needed a disciplined habit in the preacher if his preaching is to be fairly judged. His congregation must have learned to find in him such a way of living and teaching as shall make his attitude of aloofness in preaching appear inevitable. All this implies no slight measure of effort on the preacher's part. He will have to say with the Roman centurion, "With a great sum obtained I this liberty." Much honest self-suppression, much careful disentangling of fundamental principles, much resolute contempt for conventional judgments, much patience and sympathy and tact, will be needed, if this conduct is not to be misunderstood. The habit of a discriminating charity cannot affect the preaching only; it must be seen to rule the preacher's ordinary conduct. If, I emphasize this point, it is because experience seems to show that the preacher's temperament

is not often favourable to discrimination in judgment or to moderation in speech. At every election the most extravagant examples of partisanship are found in the utterances of Christian ministers.

"Hard cases make bad law," is a legal aphorism which is capable of many applications, and among them one that illumines the subject of our present discussion. Granting frankly that at intervals there emerges a situation in which the duty of every honest citizen, and therein preëminently that of every Christian minister, admits of no reasonable doubt, a situation in which issues are in such wise manifest, that it must be plainly said that the cause of righteousness is expressed by one side of a controversy, can we suppose that this extraordinary state of things can provide precedents for the direction of the preacher's conduct at ordinary times? If it be argued that the sole judge of every situation must be the preacher himself, we may admit the fact, and only plead that the preacher should base his decision on a reasonable estimate of facts, and a modest reckoning of his own competence.

In these discussions which concern procedures which lie outside the obvious reference of his commission, there is some danger that the preacher may be misled by that identification of the Church with the ministry, which has so deeply and so mischievously affected Christian thought. A

limitation of the preacher's liberty in the treatment of social and political questions is easily represented as a curtailment of the range of CHRIST'S influence, as if an artificial bisection of human life were suggested, and on one side of the dividing line conduct was governed by Christian principles, and on the other side was released from their control. It hardly needs that I should repudiate so monstrous a theory. We cannot of course assert too strongly the universality of the claim of CHRIST; that no part of human life lies outside the regenerating influence of the Incarnation; that every human career seen from the vantage ground of Christian faith is Divinely ordained to be in its degree morally redemptive. It is true, and cannot be too much insisted upon, that the citizen must determine his civic action by the Law of CHRIST; that his conduct in business no less than his home life and his public worship must be governed by his discipleship; that he is called to a complete consecration in service. May we accumulate the functions of the Christian society on the Christian ministry? To do this is the radical vice of sacerdotalism. Yet surely nothing less than the transference of the entire responsibility of the Church to the minister is implicit in the version of Ministerial Duty which is assumed by much modern preaching. He is supposed to declare with authority what the Christian law demands in the case of men placed

in situations of which he can hardly form a notion. He is to mark out for the employer and for the workman the due limits of duty; to determine where falls the line between honest and dishonest competition, between fair and unfair coercion, between the payment of a "living wage" and "sweating," between a legitimate profit and a profit that is a veiled robbery, between a just rent and an excessive rent, between advertisement that a Christian man may use and advertisement which he may not, between investments which do not violate the law of righteousness and those which do, between political methods which befit a Christian statesman and those which do not, and so forth *ad infinitum.* The Christian minister is supposed on this theory of his duty to stake out the precise requirements of discipleship in the myriad and infinitely various situations of human life. The Sermon becomes a "giving of the Law," not a preaching of the Gospel. It is an effort in casuistry, not the Message of the Spirit. The directing functions of the Roman Confessional are carried over to the Protestant pulpit, and the preacher stands among the people as a "Ductor dubitantium" in the most literal sense. I do not, of course, suggest that the full extravagance of all this is perceived by the clergy whose conduct yet presupposes nothing less. We may assume that they are carried unconsciously by a mistaken method into a situa-

tion, the absurdity of which is undetected. The analogy of the Roman Confessional is close and suggestive. There also the grotesque result has been attained by the action of a false method. LIGUORI has described the qualifications of a confessor in terms so exalted that one might well doubt whether an adequately equipped confessor had ever existed in the Church, which commissions every priest to hear confessions. He tells us that "the task of the confessor demands a knowledge of all sciences, of all offices, and arts," and a little reflection will show that he does not speak excessively. Yet who is thus omniscient of the sons of men? The falseness of the theory is proved by the impossible character of its presuppositions. So with the case of the Christian preacher. He cannot be reasonably credited with functions, for which manifestly he cannot be adequately equipped. Even if it were otherwise, such precise direction from infallible guides would run counter to the true spirit of CHRIST'S religion, and bring men again under the yoke of the legal letter. The Christian man as such has the assurance of a Divine Director, not speaking from without in pulpit or confessional, but from within the shrine of his own surrendered heart. His own conscience, illumined by the Holy Ghost and guided by the Mind of CHRIST, must be casuist and director for every Christian man; and the whole work of the preacher is

always ancillary to the action of the individual conscience.

We may add a practical consideration, which may commend the argument in some quarters where theoretical considerations carry little weight. Whatever moral impressiveness may attach to the preacher's action, when at a crisis he gives free course to his personal convictions as to the rightness or wrongness of specific policies, will depend on his ordinary aloofness from party politics. The preacher who is continually delivering himself on political issues in the superlative language of perfervid assurance has no reserve of power to draw upon in those rare but decisive moments when a clear voice of disinterested guidance is the service which the nation requires from the Christian Church.

We conclude, then, that while the "liberty of prophesying," in respect of direct applications of Christian principles to the questions, economic, social, political, which form the staple of party conflict in free modern communities, must be unrestricted by external authority, it ought to be limited by the preacher himself in deference to many considerations of varying degrees of cogency. The guiding principle throughout must be a clear and just perception of the preacher's proper business. Every course of action which implies a departure from the line of manifest duty must be rigorously criticized, and only allowed when

its rightness has been made clear to the preacher's conscience. Exceptional circumstances may demand in the future as in the past that the Christian preacher should become the leader of political opinion, or the organizer of social reform; but normally it will not be in those characters that he will fulfil his ministry. He is concerned primarily with men's characters, not with their circumstances; by reforming the first he aspires to make them masters of the last. Any action which tends to obscure the ultimate purpose of his ministry is doubtful, and may be dangerously wrong. We may apply to it the vigorous language of BAXTER, when he emphasizes the necessity of having a right end of ministerial work: "Hard studies, much knowledge, and excellent preaching, are but more glorious and hypocritical sinning if the end be not right."

The note of Christian preaching is spirituality, and the effect of Christian preaching is spiritual mindedness. The spirituality of the Gospel does not mean its remoteness from common life, but its power to transfigure common life into something enduring and sublime. The spirituality of preaching is not shown by a manifest lack of relevance to the interests and activities of citizenship, but by a subjection of all these to the empire of the Spirit of CHRIST. The spirituality of the preacher does not mean that he moves through life with the helplessness of a recluse and the

unconsciousness of a child, but that he lives "as ever in the great Task-master's Eye," and sees his duties, domestic, civic, political not less than official, as so many interpretations of his MASTER'S claim. The opposite of spirituality is secularity, and it is secularity which has always been and always will be the besetting danger of the Christian, and preëminently of the Christian minister. The power of his message and the impression made by his example are inseparably linked, for "the world is better able to read the nature of religion in a man's life than in the Bible," and *a fortiori* than in sermons. It were no extravagant or even grave inadequate description of Christian preaching to say that it is always directed against secularity, that "mind of the flesh" which is in perpetual conflict with the "mind of the spirit." The Christian life is a gradual and advancing conquest of secularity. I believe it is difficult to overestimate the value to the Christian of spiritual preaching, and the gravity of the loss which any secularizing of the Christian pulpit will inflict on the Church. What spiritual benefit can be reasonably thought to come from preaching which is confessedly connected with party conflicts, which counts as an asset in the estimate of party resources, which aims at stimulating party zeal, not at correcting the bad passions of partisanship?

That the motives of the clergy are high and

unselfish must in justice be allowed, but this circumstance only adds gravity to their error in committing their ministry to connections which are intrinsically degrading. To make the Church acceptable to the multitude is a generous and even a legitimate object, but it may be given too high a place in the thought of the preacher. There is need to avoid the risk of compromise too ardently pursued, "propter vitam perdere causas vivendi."

Let me conclude my argument by calling to your remembrance a famous example of the evil consequences which may follow a confusion of the functions of the preacher and the politician. If I speak of so familiar a history as that of SAVONAROLA, it is because that history is constantly pleaded as a precedent for the political activity of modern preachers. It may well be maintained that the action of SAVONAROLA, in leaving his normal tasks and undertaking the political direction of Florence, was fairly justified by the extraordinary circumstances in which his decision was reluctantly taken. His enthusiastic biographer, VILLARI, assures us that he was coerced by the desperate situation of the city, which regarded him as the one person competent to save the State:

"Even now, when his human will was bending to the irresistible force of events, when he saw the people languishing in idleness and misery in the

midst of the general suspense, and his heart was admonishing him that charity knows no law, he still struggled against his fate."[1]

Necessitas non habet legem. In similar circumstances who would condemn a modern preacher for deserting his proper ministry, and entering the arena of political strife?

Apart, however, from the defence which may be made for SAVONAROLA'S action, is it the case that his invasion of the political sphere, however excusable, is a precedent which Christian ministers ought to be eager to follow under the very different conditions of modern life? Does even the example of that heroic preacher permit us to think that the Christian minister as such is well adapted for political leadership? We may recall the late Bishop CREIGHTON'S carefully-weighed judgment on SAVONAROLA'S career:

"The preaching of Savonarola had led a large number of citizens to regard Charles VIII as the scourge of God who should purify the Church; and Florentine vanity was gratified by the thought that she was to serve as a model to the regenerate world. The influence of Savonarola was a strange mixture of good and evil. It awakened a higher sense of Christian zeal and of moral effort; but it also rested on a definite scheme of politics, according to which Charles VIII was a heaven-sent deliverer, and the rights which Florence

[1] *v.* "Life and Times," vol. I, p. 259.

recognized as inherent in her own citizens were denied to the citizens of Pisa. As a moral and religious teacher Savonarola deserves all praise; as a politician he taught Florence to take up a position adverse to the interests of Italy, to trust to France blindly in spite of all disappointments, and to war against Pisa for casting off the Florentine yoke in the same way as Florence herself had cast off the yoke of the Medici. We cannot wonder that this attitude awakened no sympathy in Italy, and that the efforts of the league were directed to the subjugation of Florence."[1]

In the new "Cambridge Modern History" there is a luminous and fascinating study of SAVONAROLA from the pen of Mr. ARMSTRONG, the leading English authority for the Italian history of that period. He points out that with SAVONAROLA "politics and ethics were so closely dovetailed that he regarded opposition to his political views as involving sin"; and, he adds, that "herein lies his justification for his unmeasured denunciation of his opponents." None the less, as Mr. ARMSTRONG clearly establishes, SAVONAROLA'S political views were mistaken, and the ultimate consequences of his political action disastrous:

"A not unnatural reaction against the new puritanism showed itself wherever Savonarola temporarily withdrew or lost his influence. Then

[1] *v.* "History of the Papacy," vol. III, p. 217.

the gambling hells, the taverns, the brothels drove a roaring trade; and Savonarola's death was followed by scenes of profanity such as Florence had never before witnessed. It was a necessary result of the fusion of ethics and politics that the reformer regarded opposition to his political views as involving sin. Thus the dividing line in politics produced cleavage in morals and religion and *vice versa*. Serious political opponents became confused with men of pleasure, and, indeed, scents and silk and sin were too apt to be the outward signs of the party loyalty of the Arrabbiati. Florence, on a small scale, prefigured our own Commonwealth and its results.[1]

I will not apologize for dwelling so long on this famous illustration of the "Preacher in Politics," for it serves to illustrate and emphasize the practical suggestion of this discussion. Since the genius and character of SAVONAROLA were unable to avoid the failure implicit in an intrinsically false blending of functions, we may not venture to count on immunity for ourselves when we in our turn repeat his error.

[1] *v.* "Cambridge Modern History," vol. I, p. 169.

VII

OF OBSERVING PROPORTION IN RELIGIOUS TEACHING

"THE great fundamental evil of our present religious history," said Bishop STUBBS in 1886, "is not difference of opinion, not even difference of belief, but the mischief of self-will and the damage of disproportion."[1] Most thoughtful men will admit the justice of this observation. A discussion of the modern preacher's "Liberty of Prophesying" would be seriously defective if it left out of count the importance of maintaining a due proportion in religious teaching, and thus guarding both preachers and congregations against the formidable risk of false spiritual perspective.

In former times this was the object with which "systems" of doctrine were constructed, and included as an indispensable element in the minister's intellectual equipment. The system-makers always assumed that Christianity is an articulated and coherent body of truth, including within it all sound knowledge, and providing the

[1] *v.* "Visitation Charges," p. 59.

key to all problems. They held, therefore, that no part of revelation could be studied safely in isolation from the whole, with reference to which it had meaning, and apart from which it might even be unintelligible. The older authorities attached great importance to the construction of doctrinal "systems" in their scheme of the preacher's duty. A few examples will serve to illustrate the point. GEORGE HERBERT, whose conception of the pastoral office was too ascetic and sacerdotal to admit of an adequate recognition of the preacher's function, yet describes the rural clergyman as providing himself with a doctrinal "system," which he thinks may best be made "by way of expounding the Church Catechism, to which all divinity may easily be reduced." He assumes, however, a considerable range of clerical reading. "The Country Parson hath read the Fathers also, and the Schoolmen, and the later Writers, or a good proportion of all, out of all which he hath compiled a book and body of Divinity, which is the storehouse of his Sermons and which he preacheth all his Life, but diversely clothed, illustrated, and enlarged."[1]

BAXTER, unlike HERBERT, for whom, however, he professes a deep respect, had been brought up in a Puritan home, where preaching was held

[1] *v.* "Life and Works of G. HERBERT," ed. Palmer, vol I, 219.

in the greatest honour. He was, therefore, little likely to underrate the importance of maintaining a just balance in the preacher's scheme of teaching, and in point of fact his "Reformed Pastor" sets the whole subject on the highest level. In an admirable and characteristic passage he dilates on the duty of choosing subjects of preaching with a due sense of religious importance.

"Through the whole course of our Ministry, we must insist most upon the greatest, most certain and necessary things, and be more seldom and sparing upon the rest. If we can but teach CHRIST to our people, we teach them all. Get them well to heaven, and they will have knowledge enough. The great and commonly acknowledged Truths are they that men must live upon, and which are the great instruments of raising the heart to GOD, and destroying men's sins; and therefore we must still have our people's necessities in our eyes. It will take us off gawds, and needless ornaments, and unprofitable controversies, to remember that *one* thing is necessary. Other things are desirable to be known, but these *must* be known, or else our people are undone for ever. I confess, I think necessity should be a great disposer of a minister's course of study and labour. If we were sufficient for everything, we might fall upon everything, and take in order the whole encyclopædia: but life is short, and we are dull; eternal things are neces-

sary, and the souls that depend on our teaching are precious. I confess necessity hath been the conductor of my studies and life; it chooseth what book I shall read, and tells when and how long: it chooseth my text, and makes my sermon for matter and manner, so far as I can keep out my own corruption. Though I know the constant expectation of death hath been a great cause of this, yet I know no reason why the most healthful man should not make sure of the *necessaries* first, considering the uncertainty and shortness of all men's lives."[1]

The subjects of controversy have changed wonderfully since the year 1655, when these words were written, and the sombre note of urgency which pervades them is rarely heard now, yet I apprehend that substantially the situation remains the same, and the modern preacher will have no real difficulty in recognizing the relevancy of the great Puritan's warning to his own case.

In his autobiography BAXTER records a remarkable change of mind, which illustrates his theory. The passage is well known, but will bear repetition:

"In my youth," he writes, "I was quickly past my fundamentals, and was running up into a multitude of controversies, and greatly delighted with metaphysical and scholastic writings

[1] *v.* "Works," ed. Orme, vol. XIV, p. 121.

(though I must needs say my preaching was still on the necessary points): but the elder I grew the smaller stress I laid upon these controversies and curiosities (though still my intellect abhorreth confusion), as finding far greater uncertainties in them than I at first discerned, and finding less usefulness comparatively, even where there is the greatest certainty. And now it is the fundamental doctrines of the catechism, which I highliest value, and daily think of, and find most useful to myself and others: the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, do find me now the most acceptable and plentiful matter for all my meditations; they are to me as my daily bread and drink; and as I can speak and write of them over and over again, so I had rather read or hear of them than of any of the school niceties, which once so much pleased me. And thus I observed it was with old Bishop USHER, and with many other men."[1]

BAXTER'S heart was ever in conflict with his head, the pastoral tenderness of the one contending with the logical severity and speculative ardour of the other, so that his contemporaries found him the most controversial and the least intolerant of religious leaders. Yet of all the numerous and excellent books on the work of the Christian minister, there is none in my judgment better worth the modern preacher's

[1] *v.* "Autobiography," Book I, p. 126.

study than his "Reformed Pastor." To this may be added his "Autobiography," which is not only a mine of historical information, but the record of the most arduous and least selfish ministry of the seventeenth century.

Bishop BURNET in his well-known discourse "Of the Pastoral CARE" defends the use of "systems of divinity," which had been not a little discredited by the metaphysical refinements of their authors, and the barren controversies which they seemed to foster.

"Here is a vast error in the first forming of our clergy, that a contempt has been cast on that sort of books; and indeed to rise no higher than to a perpetual reading over different systems is but a mean pitch of learning; and the swallowing down whole systems by the lump has helped to possess people's minds too early with prejudices, and to shut them up in too implicit a following of others. But the throwing off all these books makes that many who have read a great deal yet have no entire body of divinity in their head; they have no scheme or method, and so are ignorant of some very plain things, which could never have happened to them if they had carefully read and digested a system into their memories."

BURNET was an advocate of extemporaneous preaching, and as such realized the risks of ignorance, when the preacher's fervour or natural

eloquence were unchecked by a manuscript. "He must be ready with the whole body of divinity in his head," said the bishop rather helplessly. Bishop GIBSON in the "Directions to his Clergy," issued in 1724, speaks with much earnestness against the anti-doctrinal tendency which at that time had made its appearance in England, and which was destined to transform the whole aspect of the national religion. "It is always to be remembered," he said, "that we are Christian preachers and not barely preachers of morality." He rightly interpreted this anti-doctrinal tendency as the result of a reaction against the excessive dogmatism of the Puritan preachers, which set in at the Restoration and led the Anglican clergy to treat in the pulpit rather of "the heads of morality" than of "the heads of divinity." The bishop would have the clergy "avoid both extremes," and do justice to both. To this end he advised "the setting apart some certain seasons of the year for catechetical discourses whether in the way of expounding or preaching." These, he said, "being carried on regularly, though at different times, according to the order and method of the church catechism, will lead the minister, as by a thread, to the great and fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith; and not only to explain them to the people, but to lay out the particular duties which more immediately flow from each head,

together with the encouragements to the performance of them; so that principle and practice may go hand in hand, as they do throughout the whole Christian scheme, and as they certainly ought to do throughout the preaching of every Christian minister."

Rather more than a century later, another English divine, KAYE, bishop of Lincoln, spoke in similar terms to the clergy of his diocese, and I suppose it would not be difficult to construct a catena of authorities from the Reformation to the present time in support of the same view as he clearly set forth in these words:

"It is essential to the efficacy of our preaching that we should ourselves possess a clear and connected and comprehensive view of the scheme of the gospel dispensation, and be able to exhibit its different parts in their due proportions and in their mutual dependence upon each other. We should regard them as forming a chain, of which the very existence depends on the union of its various links. The justice of this remark is so universally recognized that, as the doctrines of the gospel are not systematically proposed in Scripture, every branch of the visible Church of CHRIST has drawn up a system for the instruction and guidance of its ministers." The bishop proceeds to claim for the Thirty-nine Articles the character of a system authoritatively provided for the Anglican clergy, but we may sep-

arate his general position from his particular illustration.

The Protestant "systems of divinity" replaced in the Reformed Churches the traditional system of the Mediæval Church, which, at the time of the Reformation, had become plainly inadequate to Christian needs. At the Council of Trent the Roman Catholic Church, restored to vigour and militancy by the Jesuits, formulated the mediæval tradition into a coherent and comprehensive doctrinal scheme, as superior to its rivals in logical completeness and formal authority as it was inferior in spiritual quality and intellectual range. Of all alike, however, it must be said that they can no longer serve their original purpose. The modern preacher is more embarrassed than assisted by the authoritative systems of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Nevertheless the practical reasons which then demanded their provision retain their force; and perhaps no circumstance of the present situation is more disquieting than the absence in the case of many preachers of any adequate consciousness of the obligation, which certainly rests on them, to guard the integrity of the Christian revelation, and the necessity of regarding truth in its totality if isolated aspects of truth are not to be wrongly presented.

The risks of doctrinal lopsidedness indeed were perhaps never so great as at the present

time. From many sides the balance of truth is threatened. Take but the three disturbing factors which every preacher must reckon with — his own idiosyncrasy and personal preferences, the drifts of contemporary opinion, the pressure of his congregation. The first is a form of professional selfishness, the next a source of distraction, the last a subtle temptation to unfaithfulness. Natural temperament is the subtlest and the strongest of all the forces which shape men's action, and of all the influences which disturb the preacher's doctrinal perspective perhaps the most innocent and the most injurious is the student's partiality for his own subject, or the Christian's preoccupation with his own spiritual problems. Christian experience seems to indicate that the risk of disturbance varies inversely with the intrinsic importance of the subject, and that the preoccupation is the greater as the problems are more purely personal. Prophetic or apocalyptic interpretation is a case which will immediately occur to the mind. What can be more spiritually unimportant than the speculations, which have filled a vast multitude of the books, which once stirred in myriads of readers an almost frenzied interest, but which now lie unopened save by the curious from year's end to year's end on the shelves of our libraries? yet what have ever been so strangely absorbing to the speculating authors themselves? What,

again, can be more strictly personal than the actual circumstances in which a preacher was "converted," the specific errors which blinded him, or the specific sins which held him in bondage; yet what is more frequent than the egotistic note in preaching, the constant reference, apparent even when not avowed, to the preacher's own religious habit, and his own intellectual and moral temptations. Some Protestant churches include in their constitution what are called "experience meetings," that is, meetings in which individual believers confess publicly their personal experiences for the comfort and encouragement of others. I am far from presuming to decide whether this arrangement has been found religiously advantageous or not, but I am sure that nothing but mischief can come from any confusion between the pulpit and the experience meeting. The functions of the two are quite distinct. Attention has already been directed to the singular persistence of class prejudices in the ranks of the Christian ministry, to the strange facility with which prevailing currents of popular opinion find expression in the pulpit, to the unwholesome pressures of the congregations. All these are hostile to that just sense of proportion, which the preacher must maintain if he is to be faithful to his vocation as the "steward of the mysteries of God." It would be difficult to overstate the gravity of doctrinal lopsidedness.

Whether we consider its effect on the preacher himself, or on his message, or on his congregation, we cannot avoid this conclusion. The preacher becomes fanatical. Ever harping on one theme, and fixing his attention on one aspect of his duty, he loses the sense of proportion as the result of abandoning the habit. The message becomes a heresy. Accumulations of false emphasis finally effect a complete perversion. The congregation becomes in spirit, if not in name, schismatical. Trained to accept a purely individualistic version of religion, it loses touch with the common heritage of faith, and is deprived of its normal safeguards against error. Fanaticism is but zeal unbalanced: heresy is but truth in wrong perspective; the crowning sin of schism is but individualism unchecked.

It is to be remembered that the preservation of truth in its integrity, and the setting forth of its several parts in due perspective, are perhaps the principal reasons why preaching has been generally confined to the ordained ministry. The preacher is supposed to be exempt from the distorting influences, to which men are ordinarily exposed. He has special knowledge of religion, and by that circumstance is set free from all the countless errors, of which the origin lies in sheer ignorance. He again is able to order his life on religious principles. He is set free from those distractions of the secular life

which indispose men to think clearly, or feel deeply, about spiritual concerns. His profession itself is religious; the conflict between their religion and their business, which so frequently distresses other men, and in many cases seems incapable of being composed, is for him unknown. Of course it is true that these advantages are purchased at a heavy price. "Be not many teachers," said S. JAMES, "knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment." The clergyman escapes many temptations of the layman, but he has other temptations of his own, more subtle and perhaps more dangerous. He must face the difficulties which the layman need not know; he must enter into perplexities not his own, and do battle with the doubts of others. His very advantages may become so many snares to him. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household," said the LORD. If the record of the Christian ministry be strangely scandalous, stained on every page with the ambition, arrogance, idleness, and sensuality of clergymen, the reason lies not in their exceptional badness, but in the extraordinary moral strain implied in their work. "Corruptio optimi pessima." The better the individual, the more conscious is he of the discrepancy between his office and himself; and the burden of that continuing discord is hard to bear. The greatest of all Christian ministers described himself as filled with

anxiety lest, after having preached to others, he himself should be rejected; and lesser men may not hope to escape the fears which shadowed the heroic spirit of S. Paul. The greater the preacher's gifts, the greater his dangers. Profound despondency follows the exaltations of the pulpit; the "orator's temperament" has special risks of its own; and success draws ever behind it the vulgar temptations to ambition and avarice. Still, when all is said, it remains the case that the Christian minister is fairly assumed to be exempt from the normal conditions of spiritual failure. He has the opportunities of knowing the truth: he may order his life after his convictions: he may make religion the principal, nay, the sole, concern. These are no mean advantages: and they may fairly be supposed to guarantee in the clergyman that large and balanced view of Christianity which sets all things in their true perspective.

The modern preacher is, however, in some important respects at a disadvantage, when compared with his predecessors. It will suffice to specify five circumstances which are distinctive of the present situation, and all more or less unprecedented — change of social custom in the matter of religious observance, fluidity of modern populations implying the failure of the old local conditions, brevity of modern sermons, free discussion of sacred subjects in the secular press,

the baleful influence of the so-called religious newspapers, themselves the creatures and instruments of religious partisanship. A brief consideration of these circumstances will not be irrelevant to our present discussion, or in itself uninteresting.

I. *Change of social habit.* It can hardly be questioned that the tendency of social habit is for the present markedly unfavourable to all forms of religious profession. Whatever may have been the case at a still earlier period, it certainly is true that, from the third decade of the last century, religious profession was the established convention of English society. But within the last generation a remarkable change has passed over the nation. In an English country house, for example, it is no longer expected of the guests that they should attend the service of the parish church. The old habit of saying grace before meals is quickly falling into disuse. Family prayers are becoming exceptional. To play golf during the hours of divine service is no longer an unusual thing even in the case of men who would profess to be members of the Christian Church. Probably the lowest orders have never been accustomed to make any religious profession, but the upper artisan and lower middle classes are now beginning to emulate the laxity of the classes above them. It is not necessary to suppose that the change of

social habit has coincided with any considerable change of religious belief. When church-going was part of the custom of cultured English life, it might mean little more. Mr. GLADSTONE once said to me in conversation that he thought Christianity was a greater force in English politics in his old age than he remembered it to have been in his youth, though the expression of it was less. Still, from the preacher's point of view, it is a very serious thing that attendance at divine service, implying, of course, audience of sermons, should be declining. Dean STANLEY conjectured that "complete individual isolation from all ecclesiastical organizations whatever might be the ultimate goal to which the world is tending." It is evident that every approximation to such a state must imply a diminution of the preacher's opportunities, and a restriction of his influence.

II. *Fluidity of modern populations implying failure of the old local conditions.* Until comparatively recent times the bulk of the English people was stationary, being mainly engaged in agriculture. The means of communication were few and bad. Roads were ill made; and rivers ill managed. Canals were not many, and of steamships and railways there were none. Perforce the people remained in their ancestral villages, and the system of government in Church and State assumed that they would. Even indus-

trialism in its earlier stages implied a stationary population. For convenience and for safety the manufacturer and the merchant lived within the walls of cities, and personally watched over their workmen. The city parishes were densely populated, and no charges were accounted to be of greater spiritual importance than those of the city clergy. In the course of the last century all this has been changed, and the change proceeds at an accelerating pace. Instead of a stationary population there is now a population in continual movement. The churches are in many places almost wholly deserted; in many more they are attended by congregations drawn from many sides and always changing: in comparatively few, save in the depths of the country, can the preacher count on the regular attendance of the same persons. The bearing of this social revolution, for it is nothing less, on the preacher's work is as important as it is unfavourable. Especially in this vital matter of guarding the integrity of the faith, presenting its several aspects and constituent truths in due perspective, the preacher's duty is rendered immensely more difficult by it. How is it possible to set out Christianity as a whole in a single sermon? What preaching can be justly appraised by an occasional hearer? Yet the modern preacher must commonly make his count with single sermons and occasional hearers. Still worse,

however, is the destruction of the old pastoral relationship, on which depended all those private and ancillary ministries which secured for the public preaching an audience both respectful and intelligent. The great place in their schemes of pastoral duty assigned by the older authorities to personal dealing with individuals is justified by the weightiest considerations, but the modern preacher, fulfilling his ministry in a shifting population, cannot, with the best will in the world, carry into practice the admirable directions of the masters. BAXTER'S experience of the futility of public preaching standing by itself is certainly not exceptional:

"I know that the public preaching is the most excellent means, because we speak to many at once; but otherwise, it is usually far more effectual to preach it privately to a particular sinner; for the plainest man that is can scarcely speak plain enough in public for them to understand; but in private we may much more. In public we may not use such homely expressions, or repetitions, as their dulness doth require, but in private we may. In public our speeches are long, and we quite overrun their understandings and memories, and they are confounded and at a loss, and not able to follow us, and one thing drives out another, so that they know not what we said; but in private we can take our work 'gradatim,' and take our hearers with us as we

go; and by questions and their answers can see how far they go with us, and what we have next to do. In public, by length and speaking alone, we lose their attention; but when they are interlocutors we can easily cause them to attend. Besides that, we can, as we above said, better answer the objections and engage them by promises before we leave them, which in public we cannot do. I conclude, therefore, that public preaching will not be sufficient: for though it may be an effectual means to convert many, yet not so many as experience and GOD'S appointment of further means may assure us. You may long study and preach to little purpose, if you neglect this duty."[1]

It is not only the personal action of the clergyman which is affected by the new *fluidity* of modern life. The disciplines of home and neighbourhood are breaking down. The preacher may no longer assume that there is religious teaching in the one, or moral oversight in the other. "Get masters of families to their duties," wrote BAXTER, "and they will spare you great deal of labour with the rest, and further much the success of your labours." This invaluable auxiliary is hardly any more to be counted on. Parents rarely attempt any systematic instruction of their children, and the old recognized coöperation with the clergy in the sacred task

[1] *v.* "Works," ed. Orme, vol. XIV, p. 276.

is almost perished. The suggestion of any quasi-parental responsibility for religious training as belonging to employers of the young — which is the just assumption of the older authorities — provokes now only a pitying smile. One advantage, indeed, the modern preacher has possessed which his predecessors had not. He has the elementary school, which, on the lowest estimate of its functions, performs for him the pioneer work of wakening the intelligence into life, and arming it with the indispensable elements of knowledge. This is no mean service, but it is not unattended with disadvantages, when, as is too often the case, the school and the Church are, so to speak, at cross-purposes. Throughout the civilized world the question whether or not religious teaching should retain a place in the scheme of public education is in debate. In England the elementary schools have hitherto been mainly under the control of the Established Church, and the parish clergy have been able to assume that their parishioners have been grounded in the elements of Christian faith and morals. This comfortable assumption can no longer be made over great part of the country, and it is probable will soon be legitimate nowhere. The probability is that within a few years the intractable jealousies of the churches will force on the English nation the justly abhorred policy of purely secular schools.

That will be a great disaster in many respects, and the Christian preacher will be placed at a fresh and most serious disadvantage. Bishop GIBSON'S warning will surely be verified:

"If children be not early instructed in the general principles of their religion, but remain strangers to the sense and meaning of the terms under which they are couched, the public discourses they afterwards hear will neither be understood nor relished by them; at least, will lose much of the instruction they would have conveyed and the impression they would have made, if the hearers had been duly prepared, first, by a general knowledge of the principles of their religion, and next by an habitual reverence for the public devotions and instructions of the church; as ordinances of GOD'S own appointment, and as a special means of obtaining his grace and favour, to all those who religiously attend them." [1]

III. *Brevity of modern sermons.* While thus the modern preacher is driven back on the sermon as almost his sole instrument of teaching, he has to use that instrument in circumstances of unparalleled difficulty. The time at his disposal is brief beyond all Christian precedent. It is, of course, inconceivable that modern congregations would ever tolerate again the immense discourses which were so popular in the seventeenth century. There is not the slightest

[1] *v.* "Charge," 1741, 1742.

reason for thinking that the hour-glasses which still linger in some of our older pulpits will ever again be restored to use. Archbishop LEIGHTON'S courageous innovation on the established practice of his age has been approved by posterity. In his Charge to the clergy of Dunblane in the year 1666, he attacked the reigning conventions with much vigour, and amongst them the inordinate length of sermons. "If," he said, "the minister think fit to make his sermon for the time upon some part of what, by himself or by his appointment, hath been read, it may do well; and possibly so much the better, the longer the text be and the shorter the sermon be; for it is greatly to be suspected that our usual way of very short texts and very long sermons is apt to weary people more and profit them less."

Bishop BURNET, who was LEIGHTON'S devoted disciple, urged the same view. "The shorter sermons are, they are generally both better heard and better remembered. The custom of an hour's length forces many preachers to trifle away much of the time, and to spin out their matter, so as to hold out. So great a length does also flat the hearers and tempt them to sleep; especially when, as is usual, the first part of the sermon is languid and heavy. In half an hour a man may lay open his matter in its full extent, and cut off those superfluities which come in only to lengthen the discourse; and he may

hope to keep up the attention of his people all the while." It is on record that BURNET did not commend his theory by his practice, being himself a very lengthy preacher. Conciseness and lucidity are indeed indispensable attributes of the modern sermon, but let the preacher be as concise as HORT and as lucid as Dean SWIFT, he cannot preach effectively without sufficient time to develop his argument and enforce his moral. There is a real danger that sufficient time will not be allowed him. His own indolence may silently coöperate with the public taste for short and ever shorter sermons; and the noblest aspect of his sacred office may, as it were by sheer inadvertence, be suffered to fall into irremediable discredit. It is certainly as true of preaching as of any other form of human effort that the lowering of ideals implies loss of efficiency, and it is obvious that the ideal of most modern preachers when they prepare for the weekly "sermonette" of fifteen or twenty minutes, which is all that many congregations desire, and as much as some will tolerate, is almost infinitely lower than that of those older preachers, whose weekly sermons represented a degree of labour and often of erudition which move the wonder of their degenerate successors and seem to rebuke their frivolity. While thus the preacher himself is induced to belittle his most exalted function by the circumstance that his congregation takes

a mean view of it, the congregation itself is altering for the worse. Only a preacher can estimate (and he rarely suspects) the effect of the congregation on the man who habitually addresses it from the pulpit. There is a further consideration which certainly must be reckoned with, at least in Anglican churches. The development of "musical services" has brought to the churches many whose interest in religion is far more æsthetic than religious, to whom the music is more than the worship, and the organist a more important person than the preacher. Even within the ranks of the genuinely religious there is quickly formed a state of opinion very unfavourable to the highest estimate of the preacher's task, and it is scarcely excessive to say that, at the present time, the preacher will often be encouraged by his congregation to take a very poor conception of his office. In this connection it may be observed that the old reasons for giving a large place to music in church are hardly as strong as formerly, since the spread of musical education and the rapid extension of all forms of musical entertainment. It is no longer necessary to go to the churches for the best music, and therefore the place of music in the public services can be determined solely with regard to religious considerations in the proper sense of the word. Worship threatens to degenerate into sensuous indulgence when

the leading motive of the worshipper is found in his keen enjoyment of that element in the service which has no necessary or indeed natural connection with his conscience or with his reason. Be this as it may, it must be apparent that the preacher is in hard case when he strives to observe the proportions of truth in discourses so straitly limited in time, and listened to with so faint an interest.

IV. *Free discussion of sacred subjects in the secular press.* We are only beginning to perceive the consequences of extending education to the multitude. An educated democracy is a new thing in human experience, for the slave-based republic of ancient Athens may be left out of count, and we have not yet realized what it involves and requires. "Religion has become once for all a matter of personal taste," said RENAN lightly, and the fact is as certain as it is dismaying; for religion, from which the conception of authority has perished, is religion only in name. Modern democracy is bending all things to its will. It has an immense curiosity and little patience. Its self-confidence is extreme, but its sense of obligation is feeble, and its faculty of reverence undeveloped. Knowledge, therefore, must be so presented as to inflict no labour on the intellect, and impose no shackles on the will. The truly fearful phenomenon of the popular press is the creature of these condi-

tions. Nothing is too sacred for handling: nothing too obscure for summary in headlines; nothing too delicate for statement in a paragraph. The mind of an intelligent artisan in England or America nourished on the class newspapers must be an anarchy of multifarious, half-understood, unrelated information on every conceivable subject. Religion and morality enter more or less obviously into every form of human effort, and they are of all subjects the most unsuitable for journalistic treatment. Yet they enjoy no privilege, but must accept the common fortune. While the preacher may be anxiously debating with himself whether he can wisely discuss some difficult question of science or criticism which seems to conflict with the Christian faith, and how best he shall guard his words against such a misconception as may imperil the simple beliefs of his hearers, his hand may be, probably will be, forced by the editors of the popular journals, who will have the whole matter before the public in its most provocative and sensational, which means its least serviceable and accurate, aspect. No previous generation of Christian preachers has had to face such a contingency, and how best to do so is hard to discover. In saying this I do not, of course, forget that modern journalism is capable of doing much for religion and morality, and may put into the hands of the preacher a new and

potent instrument of spiritual influence: but I am now concerned with the special difficulties of our time, and amongst them must certainly be reckoned the influence of popular journalism.

V. *Baleful influence of the so-called religious press.* The preacher who would criticise conventional beliefs, and pursue a course adverse to the prevailing policy of his church, must sustain the opposition of the religious, that is, of the party, press. His words will be torn from their context; distorted into senses which were foreign to his mind; paraded before an excited and ignorant public without any of the reservations with which he had conditioned them. His explanations will be ignored: he may count himself fortunate if his personal character is not maligned. One of the gravest facts of our time is the power for evil of the "religious" press. No instrument for the enslavement of human understandings and the persecution of individuals can surpass what modern Roman Catholics call *la bonne presse.* An impressive illustration of its power was recently provided by the clerical journals in France, which played a conspicuous and shameful part in the tragedy of DREYFUS. At the present time the Modernists are being subjected to the same malignant influence. Unblushing and persistent assertion is the normal method: the manufacture of panic is the grand object. There is something in the

condition of the modern world which is extremely favourable to this procedure. The masses are still too illiterate and inexperienced to criticise what they read, or to question the authority of the printed page. They are little likely to suspect that there is any other side of a debated question than that which is placed before them with oracular decisiveness. "Heresy hunts" can thus be quickly raised: and reputations created or destroyed to order. In the Protestant churches the level of average intelligence is higher, and the traditions of fair play are stronger. Yet even there the influence of sectarian newspapers is powerful and mischievous. Let the preacher take all possible pains to guard against doctrinal lopsidedness, and he may find that the false emphasis, which he had avoided, has been eagerly provided by the garbled extracts and inflammatory comments of the religious press. It is a curious and depressing speculation why journalism which specifically concerns itself with religious affairs, and is indeed commonly the work of Christian ministers, should fall conspicuously below the modest level of morality attained by the journalism which is frankly secular. The fact is undoubted; and the scandal is great; but the causes are obscure and the remedies hidden.

The modern preacher, then, labours under considerable disadvantages, which renders his fulfilment of duty far more difficult than was

formerly the case. Inasmuch, however, as these disadvantages have no connection with his personal fault, but inhere in the conditions under which his ministry must be carried on, he need not be unduly depressed. More careful he ought to be, but not less courageous. Let him remember that there have been former times of transition in the long history of Christianity, and that these presented, not indeed the same problems, but problems which to the men who had to solve them appeared not less difficult. Looking back on the past we can see that those were most serviceable to truth who embraced the risks of change. We must never forget that we are the spiritual children of the reformers, themselves the courageous innovators of their time. Too often, indeed, loyalty to the Reformation is strangely represented as identical with an unintelligent perpetuation of the doctrinal forms, and even of the ecclesiastical arrangements, of the reformers: but manifestly their example requires us to welcome new truth, not to stereotype old formulæ. Such loyalty is really only a shabby version of Mediævalism. Father Tyrrell has contrasted Mediævalism and Modernism in these words: "The difference is that whereas the Mediævalist regards the expression of Catholicism, formed by the synthesis between faith and the general culture of the thirteenth century, as primitive and as prac-

tically final and exhaustive, the Modernist denies the possibility of such finality and holds that the task is unending just because the process of culture is unending."[1]

Modernists in some sense we must be if we are faithful to the tradition of the Reformers. No considerations of prudence can authorize a repudiation of our spiritual birthright; at all hazards our "liberty of prophesying" must be preserved intact. To every appeal which implies any tampering with that sacred heritage, we reply in the manly words of S. PAUL: "With freedom did CHRIST set us free: stand fast therefore and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage." When, however, the point of principle has been definitely secured, we are imperatively required to heed the requirement of charity. The claims of the "weaker brother" must be fairly met, and no measure of self-suppression, that is consistent with moral fidelity, is too great to be asked of us. Charity insists that in setting forth truth that is novel and therefore disturbing, we most avoid scrupulously all unnecessary offence, and of such offence surely none is more culpable and injurious than that caused by the undue emphasis which makes our teaching lopsided, and distorts the perspective of Christian faith.

[1] *v.* "Mediævalism," p. 146.

VIII

OBJECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In the course of our discussion we have claimed for the Christian preacher the right to think freely, and to speak freely, within the limits prescribed by personal discipleship and pastoral duty. Such "Liberty of Prophesying" may be criticised from two points of view. From the side of the Church, it may be urged that it implies a perilous belittlement of the authority both of the doctrinal tradition and of the ecclesiastical executive. From the side of the preacher it may be maintained that functions are accumulated on him beyond his powers. These criticisms are too important to be ignored, and too plausible to be neglected.

I. It is, of course, apparent that the whole discussion has proceeded on the Protestant hypothesis of the Church. Any notion of ecclesiastical infallibility inhering in the decisions of the clerical executive is plainly inconsistent with it. The doctrinal tradition of Christendom must be conceived of differently by the Protestant and by the Catholic: but the difference has been

very gradually perceived, and is still far from being realized. There is indeed no slight confusion in the Catholic ranks. The older doctrine, which received classical expression in the controversial writings of BOSSUET, supposed that a developed theology, coherent and complete, had been originally delivered to the Apostles, and was produced by their successors as the necessities of the Church required. Its Divine origin was held to be sufficiently authenticated by its unique immunity from that law of change which governs all terrestrial things. It was *semper eadem*, an unaltered and unalterable faith, confronting the unending variations of Protestant theory with the same calm aspect of eternal truth which the Spirit of Truth Himself had impressed on it at the start. The visible oneness of the Church was matched by the oneness of its doctrine. So DRYDEN pictured the contrast in his controversial poem:

> One in herself, not rent by schism but sound,
> Entire, one solid shining diamond;
> Not sparkles shatter'd into sects like you:
> One is the Church, and must be to be true:
> One central principle of unity.
> As undivided, so from errors free,
> As one in faith, so one in sanctity.
> Thus one, thus pure, behold her largely spread,
> Like the fair ocean from her mother's bed;
> From east to west triumphantly she rides,
> All shores are watered by her wealthy tides.

> The Gospel sound, diffused from pole to pole,
> Where winds can carry, and where waves can roll,
> The self-same doctrine of the sacred page
> Convey'd to every clime, in every age.[1]

The appeal to history was fatal to this view of the Church, and, in point of fact, it has few defenders now, although it remains the official doctrine of the Roman Church. It has been replaced in formal apologies by various forms of that theory of ecclesiastical development which is commonly attributed to NEWMAN, and which at least avoids the obvious difficulties of the older doctrine. It has, however, other and perhaps not less formidable difficulties of its own. Evolutionary infalliblists are led to the perplexing conclusion that the latest phases of the doctrinal tradition are the truest, and that the least satisfying version of the Gospel is that of the Apostles. The perception of this paradox really determined the action of the reformers when they pleaded the authority of Scripture against the doctrinal tradition of the infallible Church. The paradox inheres in every theory of the Church which sets it above the New Testament. "We Protestants," said BURNET, shortly "found our religion merely on the Scriptures," a statement which must be supposed to mean that the apostolic version of the Christian revelation is the rule of faith for all time, and the criterion of

[1] *v.* "The Hind and the Panther," Part II, 526 f.

theological development. No Protestant could ever say of the Scriptures with Father TYRRELL, that "after all they are but a few chance leaves torn from the book of tradition."[1]

The doctrinal tradition of Christendom has no validity in Protestant eyes against the teaching of the New Testament, and all theological development must on the Protestant hypothesis be conditioned by fidelity to the primitive and unalterable norm of truth. This position seemed comparatively simple when the New Testament was held to carry a plain meaning, and to hold an impregnable position. The special difficulty of the present time arises from the new consciousness that neither of these suppositions is permissible. We have to recognize in the religious interpretation of the apostolic witness a problem of great perplexity, and in the defence of the New Testament as the rule of faith an apologetic task of primary importance. The doctrinal tradition of Christendom, moreover, is not a clear-cut authoritative body of truth, set forth in the formal decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies in the past, and capable of precise authoritative formulation in the present. The statutory Anglican position which ascribes authority to the decrees of the first four general councils, but repudiates those of later assemblies, is only tenable as a provisional arrangement, intended to

[1] *v.* "Mediævalism," p. 55.

tide over a crisis. It cannot be grounded on any recognized ecclesiastical principle, and it is plainly illogical. Every recognition of ecclesiastical development implies a belief in the continuous action of the Holy Spirit within the Christian society, and prohibits the arbitrary selection of periods of ecclesiastical history, and the clothing them with exclusive authority. The spirit of CHRIST is as truly in the Church of the twentieth century as in that of the fourth, and His leading of one generation is never such as to relieve the next of its responsibility, or to deprive it of His guidance. The "Witness of the Spirit," however, cannot be limited to the official decisions of the clergy in any age, but manifests itself in the whole process of Christian life and thought. It is most apparent, perhaps, where it is least expected and least recognized. The moral advance of the Church revealed in the new sensitiveness to all forms of oppression, the new respect for the individual conscience, the exaltation of those natural relationships which find expression in domestic life, is surely far more truly the effect of the Spirit's leading than the vast fabric of theological dogma and moral speculation which is found in conciliar decrees and canons, in the tomes of patristic divinity and in the voluminous writings of the casuists. Yet, from the Catholic point of view, the last alone can be formally treated as possessing in a

measure Divine authority, for the clerical executive, which *ex hypothesi* is the organ of the Spirit's guidance, cannot directly concern itself with the first. On the Protestant view of the Church the authority of the clerical executive shrinks to the modest dimension of a disciplinary concession. The preacher defers to it so far as law compels and conscience permits, but never concedes to it any power to coerce his thought, or remove from him his personal responsibility. It is a practical question for ecclesiastical statesmen whether the legal requirement shall be strict or lax, the liberty recognized be small or large. We have maintained the wisdom of restricting the claim of external authority within the narrowest limits consistent with the interest of spiritual religion and the peace of the Church; we have pointed out that in most Protestant churches at the present time those limits are transgressed by denominational subscriptions which inflict hardships and humiliation on preachers, and bring on religion no slight discredit. The soundness of these positions is shown not merely by the distress and embarrassment of individuals, but far more impressively by the general admission that the distinctive denominational beliefs have everywhere lost most of their old importance, so that the question is being raised and debated within all the Protestant churches of the English-

speaking world, whether the ecclesiastical systems which were built on doctrinal bases, which are failing, ought any longer to be maintained. The solidarity of Protestant belief and the substantial agreement of Protestant doctrine are implied in the now common practice of interchanging pulpits. When so much may be postulated, the *raison d'être* of denominational separation would seem to be failing. Preachers in the past were the principal organizers of Protestant sectarianism: they may be destined to become the prophets of Protestant unity.

II. The objection that the "Liberty of Prophesying," which has in this discussion been claimed for the Christian preacher, implies the accumulation of functions on him wholly beyond his capacity, deserves to be carefully considered. Can the ordinary preacher be reasonably or prudently encouraged, or even permitted, to undertake an independent examination of doctrinal and critical questions, which have been formally settled by the ecclesiastical authority, which presumably he recognizes? Can he be fairly supposed to have at his disposal the time, the knowledge, and the mental training, which are needed for the work? Can the Church safely tolerate a liberty which, for its right exercise, demands qualities which, there is good reason for thinking, comparatively few of the clergy possess? In view of all the circumstances of the

modern Church — the low intellectual level of average clergyman, the haste and distraction which ordinarily mark clerical life, the extreme complexity of critical and doctrinal discussions, the grave spiritual consequences of ignorant handling of religious questions in public, and so forth — would it not be the wisest course to accept a delimitation of functions, and a corresponding variety of system, reserving to academic circles of critical and theological specialists the right to treat freely of debated subjects, and holding preachers rigorously to the registered decisions of ecclesiastical authority?

It might, perhaps, be sufficient to reply that, whatever the risks of allowing liberty to the preachers may be, no other course is any longer possible. The subject has long been stripped of obscurity; even its technical terms are passing on the lips of men in ordinary conversation. The decisive issues are debated in newspaper articles, in widely read magazines, in cheap books. Every moderately educated man has to his hand the conclusions of the specialists set forth, often with much literary skill, in his mother tongue. The arguments offered are in no special degree obscure or technical; they have an aspect of taking familiarity, appealing to reason and good sense, and only assuming critical principles which are already accepted in the case of every history and literature save those of Israel. If,

then, the public discussion of Biblical criticism be regrettable, the blame must lie, not with the preachers, who can hardly be said to have any choice in the matter, but with those eminent scholars who for purposes of their own have popularized the results of their studies in a multitude of cheap publications. The most we can now do is to insist that the free handling of Scripture in the pulpit shall be conditioned by adequate knowledge, by pastoral duty, above all, by deep and sustained reverence. The time has for ever passed in which critical discussions could be confined to professed critics in academic spheres.

Even if the case were otherwise, such restriction of liberty would not be desirable. Hardly any danger to Christianity is greater than that implied in a recognized severance between the scholars and the teachers of the Church. This severance, however, is a familiar feature of Christian experience. It appeals to the vanity of the scholar, to the practical sense of the teacher, to the ambition of the ecclesiastical politician, to the timidity of the religious conservative. It is always threatening the Church, but in times of religious transition, which are always also times of intellectual activity, it assumes a greater plausibility, and seems to receive the general sanction. Two famous crises may be recalled to mind with advantage. The first contact of the

Gospel with Greek thought coincided with a disposition to separate the knowledge of the few from the faith of the many. Gnosticism has a curiously modern aspect. It anticipates some of the questions which agitate the modern Church, and illustrates tendencies which are powerfully affecting ourselves. Little alteration of MANSEL's description of the ancient gnostics is needed in order to adapt it to the situation with which we are confronted.

"Gnosticism revived the idea, familiar to heathen thought but wholly alien to the spirit of Christianity, of one religion designed for the wise and the initiated, and another for the ignorant and profane vulgar. Faith, the foundation of Christian knowledge, was fitted only for the rude mass, the ψυχικοὶ, or animal men, who were incapable of higher things. Far above these were the privileged natures, the men of intellect, the πνευματικοὶ, or spiritual men, whose vocation was not to believe, but to know. . . .

"Such a distinction, as NEANDER has well observed, was natural in the heathen systems of antiquity, because heathenism was destitute of any independent means, adapted alike to all stages of human enlightenment, for satisfying man's religious needs. Such a means, however, was supplied in Christianity by a faith in great historical facts, on which the religious convictions of all men alike were to depend. Gnosti-

cism, by a reactionary process, tended to make religion forfeit the freedom gained for it by CHRIST, and to make it again dependent on human speculations. Christianity had furnished a simple and universally intelligible solution of every enigma which had occupied thinking minds — a practical answer to all the questions which speculation had busied itself in vain to answer. It established a temper of mind by which doubts that could not be resolved by the efforts of speculative reason were to be practically vanquished. But gnosticism wished to make religion once more dependent on a speculative solution of these questions. Religion was to be founded, not on historical facts, but on ontological ideas: through speculations on existence in general and its necessary evolutions, men were to be led to a comprehension of the true meaning of what Christianity represents under a historical veil. The motto of the gnostic might be exactly given in the words of a distinguished modern philosopher, 'Men are saved, not by the historical, but by the metaphysical.'"[1]

This gnostic attitude of mind is very common at the present time, and is disclosed whenever some injudiciously crude utterance of the popular teacher raises a clamour in the religious world against the "new criticism." The responsible authors of the unpopular opinions hold their

[1] *v.* "The Gnostic Heresies," p. 10.

peace, and stand apart in the temper of academic superciliousness, while their imprudent or too honest disciple is left to his fate. An even closer parallel to the situation of the modern church is presented at the time of the Renaissance. Then the divergence between popular belief and educated opinion was wider than perhaps it has ever been before or since. The Humanists, who were the Modernists of the time, "adopted the conception of combining Platonism and Christianity in an eclectic mysticism which was to be the esoteric Christianity for thinkers and educated men, while the popular Christianity, with its superstitions, was needed for the common herd."

Professor LINDSAY points out the essentially non-religious temper of Humanism: "The authority which the Humanists revolted against was merely intellectual, as was the freedom fought for. It did not belong to their mission to proclaim a spiritual freedom or to free the common man from his slavish fear of the mediæval priesthood; and this made an impassable gulf between their aspirations and those of LUTHER and the real leaders of the Reformation movement."[1]

The effect of establishing a distinction between the professed scholar and the official teacher, tolerating the largest liberty in academic circles while insisting on severely restraining the lib-

[1] *v.* "History of the Reformation," vol. I, p. 65.

erty of preachers, is mischievous both on professed scholars and on preachers. The latter are held down to conditions of ministry which are intrinsically degrading, and which indeed no honourable man could permanently accept. The former are freed from responsibilities which properly attach to the Christian's scholar's position, and which none can ignore without the gravest risks to truth. A dangerous breach between educated thought and official teaching is created, and must necessarily grow wider until a complete divorce has been effected. When that result has been reached, there is but short life left for intellectual liberty even in academic circles. The conscience of honest men revolts against a dualism which has the aspect of gross hypocrisy: the deeps of unintelligent piety are stirred by some clear call of sincere fanaticism; and the dénouement of the policy of immoral expediency is the triumph of a persecuting obscurantism.

Accepting, then, with open eyes the considerable risks involved in giving full liberty to preachers, within the terms of the Christian discipleship, we must find the only effective securities against didactic extravagance in the maintenance of a high standard of pastoral duty, in the sound education of the clergy, and in the encouragement among them of those habits of study and devotion which at once illumine and

discipline the mind. The first will secure the considerate caution and long-suffering patience of charity; the next, largeness of view and a basis of sound learning; the last, that union of intellectual sympathy and deep reverence which is the true distinctive note of Christian culture.

Something has already been said as to the advantages of uniting the preaching with the pastoral function. Here it may suffice to point out the security against mere intellectualism which it provides. The pastor is not primarily concerned with the questions which agitate scholars and divines: he has to deal with the great undisputed fundamental verities of religion, and to bring them effectually to bear on individual lives. In teaching the young, in comforting the bereaved, in remonstrating with the sinful, in restoring the penitent, in solving the problems of simple souls, in visiting the sick, in sustaining in their last conflict the dying, the preacher discovers the deeper truths, and the deeper meaning of truths, which in the excitement of controversy, and the sword-play of critical argument, are lost from view. He will find himself as a matter of course holding his theories rigorously to their spiritual implications, and imposing moral conditions on his intellectual tolerance. The late Dr. Bigg, himself a fine example of the combination of the preacher and the scholar, has made some wise observations on this point.

Let me quote a short passage from his addresses on "The Trials and Blessings of a Scholar's Life," which have been posthumously published:

"But now, if the Truth is a Person, the chief of all intellectual dangers must lie in Abstraction. Yet Abstraction is the scholar's weapon, the keen-edged tool with which he forces his way into the rocky fastness of knowledge.

"And so indeed it is the greatest of perils. The habit of abstract thought is the arch-trial out of which flow all kinds of aberration.

"You may see this in little superficial things. The student is very often rather odd, eccentric, absent-minded. People do not expect him to be practical. 'He is a man of books,' they say, 'and his head is in the clouds.' The parish is always surprised when the clergyman proves to have any business capacity. . . . The student as such is only half a man. He is a thinking machine, and always needs to recall the fact that the logical apparatus is not the whole of him. The artist and the poet and the saint have their truth as well as the thinker. The Platonists held that the lover also is a discoverer, that mere human affection is a great teacher. And surely it is so. . . .

"Shall we say that truth of knowledge comes through study, but truth of being through love in action? Love forms character, while study disciplines talent, and hence GOETHE said that

'talent grows best in solitude, but character is moulded in the stream of the world.' . . . 'By these considerations you may test every ideal that men pursue. The more concrete it is the greater will be its truth. Vaguest and most abstract of all is humanitarianism. And therefore it is inevitably cruel. Often we stand aghast at the contrast between the tender words and the barbarous actions of the friends of humanity. But in a University the most seductive of all false ideals is that of self-culture. . . .

"The cry of human affection and human trouble comes from without and is answered from within. You must deal with it, because you are not students only, but men. Not in bread alone nor in books alone will you find the staff of life. Our Saviour is there where living men and women need our help. 'Thou hast seen thy brother,' says an old mystic, 'thou hast seen God.'"[1]

Therefore, in the interest of religious truth itself, we must not tolerate any isolation of the scholar; in the interest of indispensable religious liberty we must not tolerate any arbitrary restraint of the preacher. The parochial preacher, who is also a student, will often be tempted to resent the interruptions to which he is exposed, and the relatively limited opportunities for study which are all that his pastoral duties will permit;

[1] *v.* "The Spirit of Christ in Common Life," p. 13 f.

but let him remember that in these circumstances of his intellectual work lie the safeguards against many errors, to which the unhindered student of the college or the cloister lies exposed. It might, perhaps, go without saying that no reasonable man would attempt, and no modest man would desire, to handle difficult and debated religious questions in public without an adequate equipment of knowledge, adequate, that is, to the handling which is ventured; yet it would argue little candour on my part if I did not acknowledge that recent experience, not on one side only of the chronic conflict between authority and freedom, has shown that this supposition cannot be made. The tendency towards specialization, which moulds the intellectual effort of our time, has nowhere led to more unfortunate results than in the sphere of clerical education. In England, perhaps more than in any other country, the clergyman has hitherto come to his ordination without technical or professional training. He has been educated in school and university precisely in the same way as the layman, and such professional knowledge as he requires has been gained after ordination. In such a system there are obviously great disadvantages, but, perhaps, even greater advantages. At least the narrowing effect of a clerical career is mitigated, and a wholesome largeness of interest is induced. Within recent years, however,

clerical education has to a great extent become professional. The theological seminary is rapidly replacing the university as the scene of the clergyman's education. Already the effect is as marked as it is unfortunate. What the French call a special "mentality" is generated in the theological college, separating the clergyman from the sympathy, and almost from the comprehension, of the layman. Perhaps inevitably the theological seminary flourishes most as the organ of sacerdotalized Christianity. Its importance in the ecclesiastical system waxes as evangelical religion wanes. Hence the seminary-bred preachers carry into the pulpit the bold dogmatism in which they have been trained, and which reflects the calculated ignorance in which they have been kept. The last secures the sincerity of the first, but cannot lessen its potency of mischief, the extreme injustice which it may inflict on individuals, or the discredit which it must bring on the Church.

"Resist the establishment of Seminaries in the Church of England," said a leading modernist to me recently; "they are the root of all our troubles in the Church of Rome."

This danger, perhaps, is peculiar to the Church of England, but that cannot be said of the defect which marks not the training, but the intellectual habit, of many modern preachers. I may best convey what I would wish to say on this

subject by borrowing the words of an illustrious scholar, whose name is honoured by all English-speaking students, the late Bishop STUBBS. In his second visitation charge, delivered in 1893, he dealt with the clergyman's reading. After pointing out the risks of miscellaneous reading, and the folly of reading bad fiction, he warned his clergy against the notion that "the real knowledge on which alone they could frame real and independent views" could be gained from "reviews, didactic articles, symposiums of real writers, and imaginary conversations of unreal ones." Then he proceeded to speak of more serious study:

"The caution to be administered in reference to more recondite reading is more serious. There are many books in men's hands just now, edifying and profitable to those who have had the training to understand them, and judge of the good and evil that is in them, but by no means fit to be taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly. And here let me remark how unmitigatedly painful it is to me sometimes to hear, and to hear of, sermons preached by young men who have read the advanced book without having worked out at all the elements of the philosophy or history upon which its conclusions are framed. It is so in history, it is so in political science, it is so in theological reading, as well as the criticism of texts and the analysis of physical

forces and phenomena. The reader who begins at the beginning has, as soon as he begins, won half his way to the conclusion; the reader who begins with the conclusions is storing up for himself a happy reserve of repentance and some disciplinary lessons which will have a real value as the conviction of his own ignorance is forced upon him.

"Do let me press upon you that standard books must be read before young men are even beginning to be in a position to judge of the value of new and startling utterances. There are far too many theological books written just now, of which the guiding idea seems to be, that in order to be forcible you must be startling. We have views on the Sacraments strongly marked by this characteristic; views on Reformation history, views on the development of the religion of the future, and what not. You may take from me, as one of the results of a life of much study of one sort or another, the warning that there is no real power in paradox, and that where a book bases its claims on startling revelations, its conclusions are apt to be either very old or very false.

"Still, there are abundant stores of good new books as well as silly ones; I wish that my younger clergy would read the safe ones first. Real knowledge, real fruitful knowledge, can only be acquired by learning one's way through such discipline; do not let the element of novelty,

even if the novelty be one of the widest general interest, and the resistance to its temptation regarded as a mark of backwardness and obscurantism — do not let the novelty of new theory or the promising vistas of developing research beguile you away from the real stores and fountains of knowledge."[1]

Intellectual indolence is the besetting sin of the modern preacher. Two centuries ago Bishop BURNET contrasted the clergyman with the lawyer and the physician, and asked indignantly whether "the noblest and most important" of all employments ought to be supposed to require less intellectual effort than was admittedly indispensable in the professions of law and medicine. The conditions under which the modern preacher fulfils his duty are, however, actually unfavourable to study. Indolence is at once fostered and disguised. Take but the excessive multiplication of sermons. Preaching in the true sense has almost perished before the stream of impromptu speech. The practice of speaking off the surface of the mind is easily acquired, and highly applauded by the religious public, which admires the facile fervour of the popular orator far more than the disciplined earnestness of the studious divine. FULLER'S description of the "faithful preacher's" method has certainly not lost relevance:

[1] *v.* "Visitation Charges," p. 233.

"He will not offer to God of that which costs him nothing. . . . But takes pains beforehand for his sermons. . . . Indeed, if our minister be surprised with a sudden occasion, he counts himself rather to be excused than commended, if, premeditating only the bones of his sermon, he clothes it with flesh *ex tempore*. As for those whose long custom hath made preaching their nature, so that they can discourse sermons without study, he accounts their examples rather to be admired than imitated."[1]

Intellectual indolence lies at the root of that lack of sympathy with new ideas which commonly marks the mass of clergymen. Having never formed a genuine love of reading, and early lost the habit of it, they fall under the dominion of their own rhetoric, and by constant iteration confirm in their minds notions, which they have never seriously examined, and could not intelligently defend. This at least ought to be capable of remedy. That the majority of clergymen should be intellectually competent to lead thought is of course out of the question; but that every preacher should know enough to escape the fanatical temper, and to secure a fair hearing for new and unpalatable opinions, ought not to be beyond attainment. So much at least a sound education for the ministry and a right ordering of the preacher's life ought to secure.

[1] *v.* "Holy and Profane State," p. 75, London, 1841.

The most simple faith ought not to be inconsistent with so much tolerance as the Pharisee displayed, when he bade the Sanhedrin let the Apostles alone in order that GOD Himself might disclose the quality of their teaching in experience. Instead of manufacturing religious panic, and organizing the vague prejudices of unlettered people against individuals, who, whatever their errors and faults, are at least sacrificing their worldly prospects in the service of what they believe to be the truth, the preachers ought to be within the Church the grand security against every form of un-Christian intolerance. We know, alas, that the very converse has been the case, that Christian history is stained from end to end by the fanacticism of preachers, that they have stood at the head of every panic, that no excesses of popular bigotry have lacked their support.

I think we grossly delude ourselves if we suppose that fanaticism is a spent force; and that the Church of the future will not continue the tradition of religious intolerance. On the contrary, I hold that the circumstances of the modern Church are, in some important respects, very unfavourable to religious liberty. Something has already been said of the baleful influence of the religious press, and of the social conditions which hamper the didactic work of the ministry. Here we may notice the peril to

intellectual liberty implied in the emotionalism of urban populations, and in the application to religion of notions borrowed from commerce. It is often assumed that "business men" are naturally the friends of liberty, and, at least in England, popularity in a commercial centre is supposed to be a sufficient certificate of religious tolerance. The truth seems to be that "business men" are extremely hostile to every form of ecclesiastical discipline which affects their own freedom of action, and to that extent may be regarded as the friends of liberty; but they have little sympathy with intellectual perplexities; they are ready to apply to religious questions the prompt and decisive methods of the city; to interpret clerical subscription in simple terms of legal contract; to make success the criterion of spiritual efficiency: and to give little consideration to any teaching that cannot command popular acceptance. Commercial Christianity is apt to be morally lax, but intellectually rigid; it easily favours sensational preaching and æsthetic services, but it has little concern with thought, and is actually hostile to discipline. The Christianity of the future will be more and more centred in great cities. The Church will express the tastes and reflect the standards of business men. "Spiritual efficiency," as understood by successful city men, will be the accepted equivalent of truth; and the liberty of prophesying will be

straitly conditioned by the prevailing fashion. In this situation I apprehend large possibilities of oppression. We shall not, indeed, ever again be scandalized by the violences of persecution; but the too independent preacher will be effectually dealt with in other ways. Ignored by his superiors, boycotted by his professional brethren, and silently expelled from public regard, he will at no stage in the process be able to complain of oppression. Yet he will be as truly sacrificed to religious intolerance as any victim of the holy office. He must find such protection against injustice as he can, not in the law which will rarely be invoked against him, nor in public opinion which will regard him with indifference or dislike, but in the fair and tolerant spirit of his brethren, who at least understand his situation, and ought not to be unsympathetic with his perplexities. Unless a great change shall pass over the clergy even that protection will be lacking. Yet the student of Christian history recalls with veneration the names, few, indeed, but famous, of those preachers, who have had the manly courage to resist the fierce and sudden pressure of religious panic, and to lift their voices in behalf of the unpopular and unfriended advocates of new truth. Who does not honour Bishop EARLE for opposing the persecution of the Nonconformists in the orgy of Anglican fanaticism which followed the Restoration? Who

does not venerate Archbishop LEIGHTON for resisting the oppression of the Scottish Presbyterians? Who does not think the better of STANLEY for standing by COLENSO, when the stream of religious fanaticism ran violently against him? Who would not rather have been on the side of the persecuted minority at every one of the recurrent panics, which throughout its history have disgraced the Christian Church?

I cannot pretend to be an optimist about the immediate future. I expect to see within a few years an occurrence of religious panic. In England certainly, — I cannot speak for America — the rank and file of Christian people are only beginning to realize the changes which are being effected in thought by the application of historical and literary criticism to the New Testament; and when they understand what is implied in that theological reconstruction, which is spoken about with so much confidence but with so little reflection, they will be vehemently disturbed. Then the familiar situation will have returned. There will be a short cut to popularity for any able preacher who chooses to make himself the mouthpiece of the popular fears, and the apologist of the popular prejudices: but it will be a popularity purchased by the gravest disloyalty to truth. I would direct the minds of the clergy — especially those who are beginning their ministry — to the high obligation under which

their office places them, to take a worthier course, to stand like AARON between the living and the dead, and stay the plague of fanaticism, to insist on the primary duties of justice and consideration, and at all costs to resist the tyrannous proposals of panic, however excused by ignorance, masked by sincerity, extenuated by practical pleas.

Bishop THIRWALL — a protagonist of intellectual liberty in days when the spirit of intolerance was more outspoken if not more potent than it is now — told his clergy that the controversies of the time — he was referring to the case of Bishop COLENSO — should "bring home to their minds the thought that we have greater need than ever to distinguish between things which do and things which do not concern our Christian faith and hope." That surely is the moral of our present perplexities. It is of vital importance to the credit of Christianity that this distinction should be made: it is matter of deep concern to multitudes of individual Christians. Who shall put hand to the task by so clear a right as the Christian preacher? Who shall handle condemned doctrines with the same sympathy, or present unaccustomed truths with the same reverence? But if the Christian preacher is indeed to fulfil this mediatorial and directing function in the future, clearly he must have prepared himself for the sacred work long before.

The crisis must not overtake him unprepared, or shake him off his personal faith. How can he hope to speak wisely or helpfully then, if his mind has not been exercised on the subject now? In order that he may be able in any measure to serve the Church as a "Ductor Dubitantium" in the coming time of acute crisis, one condition must be satisfied. His own intellectual freedom must be complete, and known to be complete. His "liberty of prophesying" must be as wide as his own discipleship demands, because no narrower limits will enable the service which another's discipleship may require. In these high concerns of the human spirit, when its fundamental loyalties are in question, and a man is confronted by the "to be or not to be" of religion itself, the mere suspicion of unreality, of conventional profession, of orthodox and prescribed belief, is fatal to confidence; and by sure consequence fatal also to all power of service.

I have sometimes indulged a day-dream of the Christian preacher as he shall be in the day when the churches shall have faith and courage enough to burn, as the Ephesians their "curious books," the formularies of doctrine and lists of official credenda, and set him in his spiritual birthright of responsible independence. I imagine him as a man, studious and sympathetic, humble because he knows, reverent because he believes, tolerant because he doubts, to whom his fellows turn

naturally in their distress since, like the old wise Cambridge teacher, he so realizes their situation, and understands their needs, that his question is ever, Quid dubitas? What doubts have visited your mind to-day? assuming, what indeed experience shows, that to doubt nothing and to understand nothing are the same; that every step forward in such a world as this must mean, for a thinking and feeling man, not only an old question answered, but a new question raised: who says of himself, "With me faith means perpetual unbelief," because in some measure he has been brought by his pastoral sympathy into accord with His Mind, Who "would feel all that he might pity all."

One concluding word of explanation may perhaps not be thought superfluous. It has not fallen within the lines of my subject to discuss those aspects of the preacher's work which are certainly more familiar, and might fairly be thought more important. I have taken comfort from the circumstance that I stand in a series of lecturers, all commissioned to treat of the same theme. The faults of any particular course of Lyman Beecher lectures may safely be assumed to have been corrected by some other. To avoid the risk of unconscious plagiarism I made a point of not reading (with a single exception) the work of my predecessors until my own lectures had been written; but as soon as this was

the case, I made the acquaintance of such published lectures as I could conveniently lay hands on. I have learned with alarm my defects as a lecturer, and with relief that those defects have been neutralized in advance by abler men. The subject which, however faultily, I have brought before you, is one of obvious importance, which at any time and for any one of you may take also the character of urgency. If I have induced any of you to consider what I have called "the Liberty of Prophesying" from a somewhat unaccustomed point of view, I shall not wholly have failed of my purpose, or abused your courtesy and patience.

IX

DIVINE VOCATION

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the Temple . . . And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send? and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go. (Isaiah vi. 1, 8, 9.)

NOTHING more provokes our curiosity than the career of an admittedly great man. What were the original springs of what we perforce describe as his originality? Whence came the enthusiasm which sustained, and the purpose which directed, his amazing achievements? Something we can discover by inquiry. Every biographer now bestows much labour on the family history of his hero, and records with scrupulous care the conditions under which his childhood and youth were passed. We have gained the key to much when we have ascertained the manner of his upbringing, and the men with whom in his impressionable early years he was brought into close and continuous contact. When we have been

told who were the parents, the teachers, and the friends of a man, we may make a theory as to him which will very probably be justified by the facts of his career. The higher the type of greatness, however, the less trustworthy will these instruments of explanation be found. Genius has no family history, and leaves no heirs to its greatness. Something, of course, must, even in the case of men of genius, be allowed to heredity, and circumstance, and personal influence, but that which is characteristic, and gives them their supreme place in the annals of mankind, will, in the case of the greatest of men, be incapable of explanation from these sources. Most of all, for they are at the summit of human greatness, will such sources fail us, when we try to understand the process, by which the religious leaders of the race have been brought to their sublime work. Then we are confronted by a phenomenon which no terrestrial factors can suffice to explain, and no industry of anxious and keen-sighted inquirers can avail to interpret. We are perforce driven to the conclusion that another Power than that which is calculable and well ascertained has been present, a Creative and Inspiring Power from on High, fashioning the human material for more than human possibilities, and binding a passing life-story of man into the very woof and texture of Divine Purpose. "*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof,*

but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the spirit."

In the sixth chapter of Isaiah we have the explanation offered by the greatest of the "goodly fellowship of the prophets" for his own career. Critical scholars have discussed the question, whether the experience described by ISAIAH ought properly to stand at the beginning of his prophecy, or whether its true position is represented by the place it holds in the collected prophecies. We can hardly be uncertain as to the main issue, whatever may be our verdict on the literary questions. An experience of the nature here described can only come at the start of a prophet's ministry, although he may not understand its full gravity until he recalls it after an interval of years. The narrative tells "the spiritual process which the prophet actually passed through before the opening of his ministry," but it gives us that process "developed by subsequent experience, and presented to us in the language of outward vision."[1]

True indeed it is that human purpose never has so definite and intelligible an aspect as when it flashes first in sudden intuition on the mind. The main end fills the vision; the essential significance absorbs the attention; all the thousand contingencies which will obscure that end and compromise that significance are as yet

[1] *v.* G. A. SMITH, "Isaiah," I, p. 58.

unsuspected. Everything is clear, clear-cut, and coercive. But with the years comes also a cleansing of the spiritual vision; and the intuitions of youth, seen in the retrospect, are seen more justly. The correspondence of the earlier and the later visions brings the verification of their quality. If the man, wise with the bitter wisdom of failure and conflict, hears still the Voice which thrilled the unshadowed heart of the boy, that Voice needs no better authentication of origin. For inspiration or for the "great refusal" *then*, for acquittal or for condemnation *now*, it was, and is, the Voice of GOD. All the years are bound by it into a single experience.

> I hear a voice, perchance I heard
> Long ago, but all too low,
> So that scarce a care it stirred
> If the voice were real or no;
> I heard it in my youth when first
> The waters of my life outburst;
> But, now their stream ebbs faint, I hear
> That voice, still low, but fatal clear.

There is the ring of reminiscence about the precise statement as to the date of the vision: "*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord.*"

The narrative of ISAIAH'S vocation, then, carries the deliberate affirmation of a judgment trained and tested by long experience. We have in it neither the extravagance of rhapsody, nor

the license of rhetoric. The prophet is not in extasy, or in the act of public oratory. To some disciple he dictates with calm conviction the story of the origin of his astonishing career. He had received a "call" from GOD; he was to his contemporaries a Divinely-commissioned man: he carried a message which at all hazards he must deliver; everything about him presupposed this primary and persisting character. For good or for ill his countrymen must make their count with him as an inspired person, the messenger of the *Lord of Hosts*. Herein, of course, ISAIAH was thoroughly representative of his class. "The prophets do not speak of a resolution or purpose, framed by themselves: but they describe a moment in which they received a call — *i.e.*, to speak from a human point of view, *were conscious of a sudden intuition, impressing itself upon them with irresistible clearness and force, and, in certain instances, communicated to them in the form of a vision.*"[1]

We may take the narrative, then, as the prophet certainly designed it to be taken, as the best account he had it in his power to give of the life which he was leading, a life which wonderfully impressed his contemporaries, and which impresses us, perhaps, even more wonderfully after an interval of more than twenty-six centuries. In the text we have combined the two essential

[1] *v.* DRIVER, "Isaiah," p. 16.

features of prophetic vocation. First of all, there is the vision of GOD, clear, fixed in the memory as having happened at a precise moment, bound up with the distinctive circumstances of the prophet's life: "*In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the Temple.*"

The death of King UZZIAH closed a career of mingled glory and ignominy, which burned itself deeply into the mind of the nation. At the end of his long reign he had been stricken with the loathsome plague of leprosy, and had perished in seclusion. The "Chronicler," who may be assumed to express the feelings of the religious class from which the prophets were drawn, connects the king's leprosy with his presumption in attempting to burn incense upon the altar of incense, and, though the historic value of the Chronicles is not great, yet there seems some reason for thinking that this narrative at least enshrines a true tradition. If this be the case, and the king's calamity was at the time generally believed to be a punishment of GOD for his ritual uncleanness, we can understand how the first thought, which would be suggested to ISAIAH'S mind by the vision of JEHOVAH, would be that of his own unfitness for the Divine Presence. "*Then said I, woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen*

the king, the Lord of Hosts." It is indeed of no merely ceremonial defilement that he is thinking. His vision of GOD is the true prophetic vision of the supremely righteous Being — the *Holy One of Israel* — Whose Will is made known to men in the monitions of conscience. He could not have been ignorant of that deep and luminous oracle which has come down to us in the pages of his younger contemporary, MICAH, and which remains the summary of true prophecy still: "*He* (*i.e.*, the LORD) *hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*" It is the deeper conception of uncleanness, as not physical but moral, that compels the thought that purification, if indeed it is to be effectual, must be a Divine Act. ISAIAH'S mind might have been uttered in the words of the prophet, HOSEA, who about this very time had been called to his ministry in the northern kingdom. "*Come and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and He will bind us up.*" The corruption in the nation, and, as the prophet sadly felt, the corruption in himself, were beyond the remedy of any lesser power. The imposing system of established religion was helpless here: all the elaborate and detailed ritual purifications prescribed by official authority were futile in that Presence. GOD HIMSELF must cleanse.

The Christian hymn utters the very thought of the prophet:

> Not the labours of my hands
> Can fulfil Thy law's demands;
> Could my zeal no respite know,
> Could my tears for ever flow,
> All for sin could not atone;
> Thou must save, and Thou alone.

"*God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*" The Divine Purification which the prophet longs for is not refused: "*Then flew one of the Seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips: and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.*" Thus ISAIAH is made ready for his work. To the listening ear of the "expectant," on whom the absolving touch has passed, is audible the Voice of JEHOVAH speaking the words of prophetic vocation, "*I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.*" This is the abiding impression left on his mind by that spiritual crisis of his youth; this is the interpretation which experience permits, nay compels, him to pass on that moment of spiritual exaltation. It gave him a direction, which he could not but recognize and obey; it burned into his soul a conviction, which nothing could ever efface. The

directness and simplicity of this Divine Call are indeed impressive: "*Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?*" The words have carried to Christian ears a doctrinal suggestion, which, however, they did not originally bear. "*The Lord of Hosts*" is thought of by the Jewish prophets as holding His heavenly court, and addressing His assembled courtiers. So in Micaiah's vision of the destruction of Ahab. "*I saw the Lord*" — says the prophet — "*Sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand, and on his left.*" It is precisely such a scene that is presented in Isaiah's vision. "The plural — Us — is no doubt used with reference to the Seraphim, who formed, together with the Lord, one deliberate council."[1]

Polytheistic phraseology dies hard: and we may not credit even the "Evangelical Prophet" with the spiritual Theism which the Church professes, and, we must add, finds it so difficult to maintain in purity. Yet, perhaps, it is no extravagant proceeding to which we are invited, when we are bidden to read the Vision of Isaiah as the special lesson on Trinity Sunday. What but the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity is the true theological basis of that belief in Divine Mission, which is paramount in Isaiah's record of his own vocation? Every partial revelation

[1] *v.* Delitzsch, "Isaiah," I, 198.

ministered through prophets was a pledge of the perfect revelation in and through the INCARNATE SON: and, therefore, without doing any violence to historic truth, we may recognize the essential idea of the Trinitarian theology in that prophetic conception of GOD, which represents HIM as in communication with men through men. Nor is it unreasonable to go with DELITZSCH yet one step farther, and to perceive in the implied solidarity of GOD and the Seraphim in spiritual purpose and activity an idea which is apparently and richly Christian.

"*We must work the works of him that sent me*" is a deep utterance of the CHRIST as presented in the Fourth Gospel; and many words of the SAVIOUR might be cited to show that, in HIS great enterprise of Redemption, HE associated HIMSELF with the blessed hierarchies of the spiritual world, and not less closely, nay, indeed by the grace of the Incarnation, far more closely, with HIS disciples.

The Syriac Fathers are said to have regarded the burning coal as the symbol of the INCARNATE SON OF GOD; and we may well see a profound fitness in the symbolism. The burning coal in ISAIAH'S vision purged away his disabling uncleanness, and inspired him with the will and the power to obey the Call of GOD. This twofold grace of purification and inspiration is the gift of the INCARNATE SON to HIS brethren. The Gospel

indeed includes a narrative which might seem the Christian counterpart of ISAIAH'S record of vocation. The revelation of GOD to an Apostle is realized through the same cycle of spiritual experiences. First, conviction of sin; then, consciousness of pardon; finally, a clear commission. SIMON PETER, when he saw the sign which discovered the Presence of the INCARNATE, "*fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord . . . and Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.*"

We may not forget that even while we worship here this morning, the conviction of Divine Vocation is being confessed by many young men in our Church. In many a cathedral to-day the Bishop asks the momentous question of those whom he is about to ordain to the Christian ministry: "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the HOLY GHOST to take upon you this Office and Ministration, to serve GOD for the promoting of HIS glory, and the edifying of HIS people?" Hundreds of young men will answer publicly in the hearing of Christian congregations that they do so trust. Perhaps it may appear to some of us a doubtful, and even an extravagant and indefensible, proceeding on my part to bring into connection the vocation of a great prophet and the ordination of a modern clergyman; and yet, however surprising this may

at first sight appear, it is precisely what is done by the Bishop in the Ordination Service, when he tells the young men whom he is about to ordain that they are called to be "Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the LORD." Assuredly nothing less than a Divine Vocation could really justify any man in assuming those characters, and nothing less than Divine Grace could make any man equal to sustain them. "*Let a man so account of us*," writes the Christian Apostle, "*as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.*" There is a long step we must needs confess between this exalted language and the humble theories of the clerical office which are current among us; indeed, with the best will in the world, we find it wonderfully difficult to give any coherent and sufficient meaning to the words of the Ordinal. Set the sublime vision of ISAIAH beside the decorous pageantry of a modern Ordination, and the contrast is not so sharp as that between the theory of the Christian ministry implied in Ordination, and that which determines the common practice. Even the guides of the clergy adopt a mode of speech about vocations which is disconcertingly prosaic and matter-of-fact. Here is an example taken from a "Pan-Anglican Paper" on "Vocation and recruiting of candidates for Holy Orders" by the Rev. H. H. KELLY, Director of the Society of the Sacred Mission:

"It is admitted by all that a vast number of those who are certain of their own vocation are quite unfit, and that we must therefore 'test' vocations. *How can we test* GOD'S *Spirit?* Of course we must recognize GOD'S action, but that action — vocation — is not limited to ecclesiastical matters. When the government by examination chooses an officer, that choice is GOD'S calling to the lad, given by the authority HE has appointed, and those who are unsuccessful cannot plead a direct 'vocation' independent of the government. We want to enlist the enthusiasm of the Church as a whole, but the moment we begin counting vocations, we are dealing not with wholes, but with separated individuals."

If I understand him rightly, he would evacuate the solemn question of the Ordaining Bishop of its searching personal reference, and encourage the candidate for Ordination to repose his entire confidence of Divine Vocation in the formal act of Ordination. What a fall from the old prophetic doctrine is here involved!

The clergyman's consciousness of personal inadequacy will unite with the laymen's reluctance to recognize the reality of Divine Action in lowering his theory of his ministry. As a PRIEST, of course, he will be intelligible enough; all the indigenous superstition of mankind applauds and admits that character. As a PROFESSIONAL MAN he will fall under a familiar and well-understood

description. As a PARTISAN he will be sufficiently welcome; for men will interpret his behaviour as they interpret their own in the same category of partisanship. To admit, however, a different and a higher character than any of these, to acknowledge the clergyman's right to approach them in the old prophetic spirit, "*in the name of the Lord*," runs counter to all their natural prejudices. Here, where the ultimate validity of our whole ministry is at stake, we are unintelligible. And from this fact there passes upon us a silent, subtle, sustained influence of degradation. We tend to sink to the level on which we are known, understood, and described. We acquiesce in being priests, or professional men, or partisans; and the great affirmation with which our ministry made its start dies away from memory, or only lingers in our thought as a distant and mocking legend. Men speak much of the decline in the number of Ordination candidates: to my thinking, the explanation lies on the surface of our modern life. The world is ceasing to require priests: there are more attractive professions: men weary of partisans. So long as these are the public and prevailing aspects of the Christian ministry, it will be equally intelligible and despised. Yet never before did men desire so earnestly the presence in their midst of the genuine prophet of the LORD. Upon our generation it would seem that the words of AMOS are being verified:

"*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even unto the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.*"

Divine Vocation must still mean essentially what the prophet's vision disclosed. The same cycle of spiritual experiences must still be traversed by the man who can face his fellows with the tremendous message. "*Thus saith the Lord.*" First, the vision which creates personal conviction — "*I saw the Lord*" — and then the crushing sense of personal sin — "*Woe is me, for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips*": and then the absolving touch of Divine Forgiveness, and in the still sweetness of that Peace with GOD, HIS call, clear, audible, coercive. "*I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*" And the answer of obedient faith — "*Here am I, send me.*" Finally, the Divine Commission, decisive yet vague, intelligible yet unexplained, all-demanding yet all-concealing, an irrevocable edict and an undisclosed fate: "*And he said, Go.*" ISAIAH tells the secret history of every true ministry while the world stands.

Forgive me, if I have been driven by the memories and associations of this day to preach to

myself rather than to you. Forgive me, and add your prayers that in us who must bear this ministry among you, and in those younger men, who have this day confessed the same vocation, the CALL of GOD may never wholly die away. In failure and desertion, in the depression of defeat, in the delusion of "success," in the darkest hour of fear and fault, let not that Voice and Presence fail us!

X

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

They said unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? or who gave thee this authority to do these things? (S. Mark xi. 28.)

THE contemporaries of CHRIST were greatly impressed by the authority with which HE taught. At the close of the Sermon on the Mount we have this note of the evangelist: "*It came to pass when Jesus ended these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.*" What amazed the people dismayed and enraged the official teachers. While CHRIST "*taught with authority*," they themselves perforce taught by authorities, a very different thing. HE was original: they were professional. The credentials of HIS teaching were in the minds of men, which involuntarily owned its truth: the credentials of their teaching were set forth in legal form in their "letters of orders," and painfully shown by a catena of references to authoritative rabbis. So long as CHRIST limited HIMSELF to teaching, they stood aside and watched HIM in the temper of

deepening malevolence: but when HE passed from word to action, they felt themselves driven to take action also. On the preceding day, Monday in Holy Week as we now reckon, CHRIST had taken action of dramatic and formidable suggestiveness. "*He entered into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and them that bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves; and he would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple.*"

We do not perceive the full significance of this conduct until we remember that the temple market was part, perhaps an indispensable part, of the organization of the temple worship, and that that worship was the core of the whole system of Jewish religion. To break up the market was all one with saying that the purposes which the market existed to serve were no longer valid. That elaborate provision for sacrifices to be offered by hereditary and purified worshippers; that convenient system of exchange by which the various coinage of many lands could be transformed into the single currency of the temple tribute; that complicated organization of sacred business which at once justified and enriched the official hierarchy — all were smitten when CHRIST, by an extreme and amazing exercise of personal authority, broke up the temple market. But HE had not

left men to draw the inferences for themselves; HE had pointed the moral of HIS action by significant words. "*He taught and said unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers.*" Here at once are combined supreme personal claim, and direct appeal to the human conscience. Here in a sentence is legalism disallowed and the religion of the spirit proclaimed. Here the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is pulled down, and an unimpeded access of men to GOD is shown. We cannot wonder that the exponents and beneficiaries of the system of religious privilege should have been deeply moved, or that the general multitude, on whom their yoke had been heavy, should have welcomed CHRIST'S speech. "*The chief priests and the scribes heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, for all the multitude was astonished at his teaching.*"

These proceedings on the Monday explain the events of the Tuesday in Holy Week. That Tuesday was "CHRIST'S last working day," and from morning till nightfall it was crowded with stirring occurrences. We may fairly conjecture that the authorities had met in conference on Monday evening, and arranged their course of action for the morrow. As soon, therefore, on Tuesday morning as CHRIST has reëntered the

temple courts, and resumed His teaching, He is encountered by a deputation from the Sanhedrin. "*As he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders*" — a deputation including representatives of every section of the Sanhedrin — "*And they said unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? or who gave thee this authority to do these things?*" As Christ and the deputation from the Sanhedrin face each other, two kinds of authority are contrasted; on the one hand Moral Authority, on the other Ecclesiastical Authority which has ceased to be moral.

Ideally there should be no contrast between the ecclesiastical and the moral; at every point of its official claim the ecclesiastical system should be the organ and ally of morality; ideally the prophet and the priest should be coworkers in the service of the same Divine Purpose. In fact, however, it has been otherwise. Almost always the ecclesiastical system fails to secure the sanction of the conscience; the moral progress of men outpaces the formal teaching of their churches, and, by a dismaying and persistent paradox, the moral standard of the priesthood falls below that of the community of believers. There are secular parallels to be found which may relieve the painfulness of the paradox. The antithesis between Law and Liberty is as unnatural as that between an official Church and Morality: but in the experience of

men it is no less familiar. Every despotism which has cursed mankind is but the depraved version of government, without which human life in any worthy sense may not proceed. In the history of religion the prophet and the priest have commonly been opponents.

These historical contrasts are expressed and interpreted, when the ALL HOLY JESUS is challenged by the hierarchs of Israel with a demand to produce HIS authority. They were certainly within their legal rights; they were but performing their official duty when thus they required from HIM an answer to the question: "*By what authority doest thou these things? or who gave thee this authority to do these things?*" We shall miss the full significance of this history unless we recognize how completely reasonable from their own point of view this question was. "They were not there to oppose HIM; but, when a man did as HE had done in the temple, it was their duty to verify his credentials." There appears to have been a very careful discipline of ordination among the Jews which curiously resembles that of the Christian Church. The presence of at least three ordained persons was required for ordination; the ceremony included the laying on of hands and the use of a regular form of words. "The title 'Rabbi' was formally bestowed on the candidate, and authority given him to teach and to act as judge (to bind and loose, to declare guilty or

free). Nay, there seem to have been even different orders, according to the authority bestowed on the person ordained. The formula in bestowing *full* orders was '*Let him teach; let him teach; let him judge; let him decide on questions of first-born; let him decide; let him judge!*' At one time it was held that ordination could only take place in the Holy Land. Those who went abroad took with them their 'letters of orders.'"[1]

CHRIST'S counter-question implies the admission that HE had no "letters of orders" to produce, but it also implies the claim to another and a higher ministry than that to which formal ordination admitted, a kind of ministry, moreover, which the professed students of the Scriptures ought not to have forgotten, and which indeed had been recently reproduced in their midst. "*Jesus said unto them, I will ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or from men? answer me.*" This question was no mere evasion, still less an adroit irrelevance, designed to embarrass the hierarchy. It carried to the heart of the issue of authority, and gave a clear answer to their question. For not only had the Baptist fulfilled a prophetic ministry of the recognized type, but he had also borne public and repeated witness to the superior

[1] *v.* EDERSHEIM, "Life and Times," vol. II, 382.

ministry of JESUS, to WHOM he had represented himself as standing in the relation of forerunner. To own that JOHN'S ministry was "*from heaven*" was by inevitable logic to own also that the authority of JESUS was Divine and ample. The LORD'S questioners indeed do not appear to have seen beyond the immediate embarrassment into which the question brought them. "*They reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From Heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But should we say, From men — they feared the people: for all verily held John to be a prophet.*" Thus they floundered in the mire of a sinful expediency, and were stricken dumb by their own selfish fears. They who had come to JESUS as representatives of established authority, fulfilling the highest function of religious leaders by examining and adjudging the claim to teach, find themselves by their own calculated silence reduced to the miserable necessity of owning themselves incompetent for the very character they had thus publicly and solemnly claimed. They had indeed answered their own question when they declared that they could not answer CHRIST'S. "*They answered Jesus and say, We know not. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.*" By what title could they claim to pass judgment on CHRIST'S right to teach, when they perforce acknowledged that they were unable to determine the lesser

point of JOHN'S authority? They had disclaimed their professional function, and confessed themselves unequal to their own theory.

These Pharisees may stand as the representatives of a numerous class of professedly perplexed persons, who have the solution of their doubts in their own hands, if but their prejudices would permit them to own it. The greater issues of belief are at once presented and disguised by the most elementary of moral obligations. Be loyal to the last, and you will not miss the first. Therefore the Christian religion is not truly represented as a schedule of credenda; only in a very artificial and secondary sense is it true to say with the Athanasian Creed that the Catholic Faith "is" a long series of metaphysical propositions. These may be sound and for some purposes serviceable, but they lie aside from the essence of Christianity. All could be firmly grasped by one who had no "*faith working by love.*" None need be known, still less understood, by one who yet "*followed Jesus in the way*" of discipleship. The conscience is uninterested in metaphysics; and the will has but a languid concern in philosophy. Only then does religion become living and powerful, when it wakens the conscience and bends the will. The Authority of CHRIST is preëminently revealed in the fact that HE commands the assent of the conscience, and directs the movements of

the will. This was the authority which HE exercised upon HIS disciples; this gave such mysterious impressiveness to HIS teaching; and at once attracted and perplexed HIS contemporaries:

"Nothing is less like JESUS," writes that wise and illuminating teacher, DR. DENNEY, "than to do violence to anyone's liberty, or to invade the sacredness of conscience and of personal responsibility; but the broad fact is unquestionable, that without coercing others JESUS dominated them, without breaking their wills HE imposed HIS own will upon them, and became for them a supreme moral authority to which they submitted absolutely, and by which they were inspired. HIS authority was unconditionally acknowledged because men in HIS presence were conscious of HIS moral ascendency, of HIS own devotion to and identification with what they could not but feel to be the supreme good. We cannot explain this kind of moral or practical authority further than by saying that it is one with the authority which the right and the good exercise over all moral beings."[1]

The Church argues securely from the unique moral authority possessed by JESUS to HIS unique moral excellence, for human experience everywhere holds these together in an exact and unfailing relation. The measure of moral influence

[1] *v.* "Dict. of Christ and the Gospels," I, 147.

is precisely the quality of moral character. Here the saying holds: "*To him that hath it shall be given: from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.*" Time tests the provisional estimates which men form of one another, and experience disallows whatsoever authority has been conceded without adequate basis in character; the demonstration of moral authority, the revelation of its credentials, is in the wear and tear of life. The fourth evangelist, whose record perhaps rather gains than loses in spiritual value when we recognize that it is not so much a history as an inspired interpretation of CHRIST, indicates the nature of HIS right to men's homage, when he represents our LORD as directly challenging the verdict of HIS contemporaries on HIMSELF: "*Which of you convicteth me of sin? if I say truth, why do ye not believe me?*" The right to belief cannot be separated from the recognition of HIS moral adequacy for the authority HE claims. One clear lapse from goodness, and that authority expires: the fact that CHRIST'S authority retained its hold over HIS followers, and has ever since succeeded in gaining hold over men, is the proof that its foundation in personal goodness is secure. Moral influence, moreover, is singularly responsive to the moral state of those over whom it has been exercised. The good draw ever to the good: "*The pure in heart see God.*" No certificate of character is more

unfavourable than that which is implicit in the fact, that a man is unresponsive to the influence of genuine goodness. There is therefore always something morally critical in every contact with superior goodness; we perforce discover our own moral state when we are in presence of a Saint. It was the inevitable cry of the possessed man when CHRIST encountered him, "*What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I beseech thee, torment me not.*" There is a law of moral kinship, a solidarity of good and of evil, a natural drawing together of like with like; and this law of spiritual congruity operates over the whole area of human intercourse, determining both the comradeships of the boy and the religious allegiance of the man. "*My mystery is for me and for the sons of my house*" is a saying attributed to CHRIST in early times, and it seems to indicate just this moral harmony which must exist between HIM and those who can respond to HIS influence. The same truth is illustrated by HIS insistence on the childlike character as a *sine quâ non* for entrance into the Kingdom; and in another connection it reappears impressively in the LORD'S Prayer where Divine forgiveness and human forgiveness are strangely and suggestively linked.

So I will assume that this question of the Sanhedrin, asked in the blindness of professional prejudice, is asked by some of us in the distress

of spiritual perplexity: "*By what authority doest thou these things, or who gave thee this authority to do these things?*" We too must find the solution of the problem of JESUS, for HIS spell is upon us, and we have been brought, as countless thousands before, to the crossways of final decision, where our whole faith in truth and goodness, nay our whole self-respect and our loyalty to the inner voice of duty, turn on our attitude to HIM. For us, then, as for those Jews, the answer to the question is to be found in another direction than that which we supposed. We must go back to the elements of religion, and take the testimony of our own earlier and more normal conduct. The "*Baptism of John*," that is, the simple issue of right conduct which faced us at the beginning of conscious life, and faces us daily with more threatening insistence as the years pass, can settle the point, What is our behaviour there? How do we judge our obligation with respect to ordinary duty?

CHRIST'S authority has its meaning revealed in our own conscience, and the secret of its unearthly strength disclosed, by its correspondence with all that we have within our own lives of purity and justice and love. HIS claim is uttered in the beckonings of duty; His character made known in the responsive ardours of our own best selves. The truth about HIM is written on the fragment of papyrus which recently was disin-

terred from the sands of Egypt: "JESUS saith: "*Wherever there are two, they are not without* GOD'S *presence: and where there is one only, I say, I am with him. Raise up the stone, and there thou shalt find Me; cleave the tree and I am there.*"

Yes; "raise up the stone" of trouble, the world's burden of sorrow and oppression which none may wholly escape, and which falls on some with direct and desolating insistence, and there, bending sadly but with unbroken spirit under its weight, thou shalt find Me, nay, that burden also shall become the Cross, My Cross, which saves the world. "Cleave the tree," that is, put hand to the plough of life's work, and in spite of its deadening routine, and strange disappointments, it shall become sacramental, bringing a Real Presence of CHRIST into the day's toil. "Cleave the tree and I am there." Obedience is the guarantee of faith. "Solvitur ambulando" is the formula of spiritual illumination. "*If any man willeth to do his will he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself.*" He who has accepted JOHN'S Baptism of Repentance shall not fail finally to receive also CHRIST'S Baptism of the Spirit. But Faith has its own order; there is but one entrance to its shrine. We must first hear the Stern Preacher of Righteousness; and then, when this lesson is mastered, follow CHRIST.

XI

CHRISTIAN TEACHING

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you. (St. Matthew vii. 6.)

THE didactic principle implicit in these words is universally admitted. In order that knowledge may be received rightly, it must be correlated intelligently with the recipient's previous knowledge. The teacher is concerned quite as much with the contents of his pupil's mind as with the contents of his own. There is as much divination as information in the art of teaching. This didactic principle holds good over the whole field of knowledge. No kind of knowledge can be received rightly save in so far as this principle is respected; but most of all within the sphere of religion is this the case, for there the conditions of receiving truth are more complex. The process of learning is moral even more than intellectual. Prejudice and passion must be reckoned with as well as ignorance and error; the subtle and largely unsuspected influence of habits

on thought must be allowed for, as well as degrees of natural intelligence. Experience, moreover, confirms the statement that great risks attend the neglect of this didactic principle of accommodation. Knowledge, offered to those who are incapacitated by prejudice for its reception, may move them to resentment and even to violence. Knowledge, forced prematurely on simple and ignorant men, receives from them the most dangerous distortion, and may become in their hands the occasion and instrument of far-reaching mischiefs. What the Wise Man said of tactless rebuking of faults is equally true of injudicious disturbance of error. "*He that correcteth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that reproveth a wicked man getteth himself a blot: reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: reprove a wise man, and he will love thee.*"

The reason of this necessity of accommodation in teaching lies in the very conditions under which the human race advances from primitive savagery to its highest level of attainment. Mankind does not maintain an equal pace of progress; no two individuals, probably, stand precisely on the same plane of mental and moral development; at any given point, a great variety of phases of human evolution coexist.

Charity therefore, no less than reason, admonishes the teacher to be slow to disturb existing notions however crude, to be tolerant of error,

to acquiesce in the concealment of truth, to give heed to the Divine warning not to pluck up the tares lest wheat be plucked up with them. It is the fact that truth can only be received in forms and by modes adapted to the specific case of the individual recipient; that no scrupulousness of sincerity on the teacher's part can guard his teaching against inevitable misconception: that modesty requires him to remember, that the clearness of his own perceptions, and the strength of his own convictions, provide no sufficient pledges of the rightness of his doctrine. Along these lines of thinking, however, we are quickly led to conclusions which are demoralizing alike to teachers and taught. For great interests grow round all established and accustomed systems of belief, so that these systems have their hold on men by other titles than their fitness to communicate truth. The worth of superior illumination seems doubtful, and the duty of declaring it seems uncertain, to the man whose comfort and importance are contingent on his adherence to the general opinions. The argument has been stated by a master in that luminous poem, "Bishop Blougram's Apology," and it is a cogent one.

> When we consider that the steadfast hold
> On the extreme end of the chain of faith
> Gives all the advantage, makes the difference
> With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule:

> We are their lords, or they are free of us,
> Just as we tighten or relax our hold.
> So, other matters equal, we'll revert
> To the first problem — which, if solved my way
> And thrown into the balance, turns the scale —
> *How we may lead a comfortable life,*
> *How suit our luggage to the cabin's size.*

It is not, of course, inconceivable that the ways of duty and interest may sometimes coincide; that, to borrow a phrase from LORD ACTON, "the shrill utterance of opportune prophecy may not always be inconsistent with integrity," but at least it must be admitted that the experience of mankind has not often witnessed the coincidence, or certified the consistency. On the whole we may be sure that it is a just instinct that makes us suspicious of a didactic caution, which is visibly connected with the teacher's material advantage, and makes us sceptical of the intellectual modesty, which quite plainly serves professional interests. Nevertheless the practical difficulty remains, and the most honest of men cannot evade it; and if experience testifies to the immoral complaisance of interested teachers, it equally testifies to the immense mischiefs of reckless ones. Nor is recklessness to be acquitted of selfishness because it commonly inflicts hardship on the reckless teacher. There is an intellectual arrogance which in its vain self-absorption omits to calculate consequences, which yet as-

suredly has nothing in common with that awful reverence for truth, which inspires the genuine Martyr's defiance of prevailing beliefs. We may allow, perhaps, that for the highest type of teacher a certain temptation arises from the manifest inconsistency of plain speaking and self-advantage, so that he is apt to belittle the obligations of charity and prudence in teaching, lest he shall injure his own self-respect, or save himself one fraction of the full cost of his inviolate independence. This is a temptation none the less dangerous because it is subtle, and its effects on character are really mischievous, albeit they are disguised.

It is manifest that the trials to which we have adverted will be specially acute at those epochs of Christian history, in which a wide discrepancy has grown between the knowledge of the learned few, and the beliefs of the illiterate multitude. Some discrepancy probably must always exist, and in no circumstances can the teacher's problem be completely solved, but there are times when the discrepancy becomes abnormally great, when the strain on the teacher's wisdom and honesty is exceptionally severe, when the risks of reckless teaching are plainly extreme. At such times, perhaps, there is special reason for considering carefully the warning of CHRIST in the text, realizing what it demands of us, and finding the true limit of its reference. Two opposed

conceptions of duty never fail to present themselves at these times of special difficulty, and both can offer strong supports in reason and in religion. The first, and most obvious, is that of the advocate of "RESERVE," who, fastening on the necessity of *some* discrepancy between knowledge and faith, extends the argument to cover the case of *all* discrepancy, and preaches the duty of acquiescing in two types of Christianity, an exoteric and an esoteric. The last, and less common, is that of the PROPHET or REFORMER, who, fastening on the Divine rights of the conscience, and disdaining the shelter of conventional accommodations, insists on proclaiming, *urbi et orbi*, the newest discoveries of truth, or of what looks like truth, and disclaims responsibility for the consequences.

"RESERVE" is a famous word in Christian history; and we may well arrest our argument to consider it. Very early in the experience of the Church, as early as the first contact of the Gospel with Greek thought and knowledge, the apparent necessity of calculated concealment of truth was forced on educated Christians. In the long conflict with Gnosticism it would appear that the victorious Church came out of the strife deeply affected by its adversary. The Alexandrine Fathers borrowed the weapons of their subtle dialectic from no Christian armoury. Let me quote some words of an honoured Oxford

teacher, whose recent loss is regretted far beyond the limits of his own university. In his famous Bampton Lectures, the late PROFESSOR BIGG thus comments on the didactic system of the Alexandrine Fathers: —

"It is possible to defend the practice of Reserve, if it be taken to represent the method of a skilful teacher, who will not confuse the learner with principles beyond his comprehension. This, however, is by no means what the Alexandrines intended. *With them it is the screen of an esoteric belief.* They held that the mass of men will necessarily accept the symbol for the idea, will, that is, be more or less superstitious. It is enough if their superstition be such as to lead them in the right direction. This is a necessary corollary of the new compromise between the Church and the world, a taint inherited from the Greek schools in which Truth was not a cardinal virtue. Freedom remains, but it is a freedom of the *élite*, which may be tolerated so long as it does not cry aloud in the streets. But let us remember the Alexandrines were pleading for the freedom, not for the restriction. It was not altogether their fault if they were driven to approximate on this point to the dreaded Gnostics." [1]

Here the special risk of every doctrine of "RESERVE" is clearly indicated. What begins as a

[1] *v.* Page 145.

method is perpetuated as a principle. What starts in the interest of teaching ends in the interest of stereotyping ignorance. What was didactic becomes obscurantist. We may see the same melancholy transformation exhibited in that critical epoch in which the modern world received its distinctive shape and direction. Perhaps at no other time, with the possible exception of our own, was the discrepancy between the knowledge of the educated few and the belief of the uneducated many so wide. The risk of any attempt to reduce it was extreme; the temptation to acquiesce in it was strong. A strange eclecticism spread quickly among the scholars, while the multitude were left to their mediæval superstitions. Free-thinking in the circles of the educated and wealthy was conditioned by a rigid orthodoxy in the working system of the Church. The triumph of intellectual liberty was to be complete within the universities on condition that it found no expression in the parishes. Take a conspicuous and representative example. A typical Humanist was MUTIANUS RUFUS, who "adopted the conception of combining Platonism and Christianity in an eclectic mysticism which was to be the esoteric Christianity for thinkers and educated men, while the popular Christianity, with its superstitions, was needed for the common herd." "In private," writes PROFESSOR LINDSAY, "he denounced the fasts of the Church, confession, and masses for

the dead, and called the begging friars 'cowled monsters.' He says sarcastically of the Christianity of his times: 'We mean by faith not the conformity of what we say with fact, but an opinion about divine things founded on credulity and a persuasion which seeks after profit. Such is its power that it is commonly believed that to us were given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever, therefore, despises our keys shall feel our nails and our clubs. We have taken from the breast of Serapis a magical stamp to which JESUS of Galilee has given authority. With that figure we put our foes to flight, we cozen money, we consecrate GOD, we shake hell, and we work miracles; whether we be heavenly minded or earthly minded makes no matter, provided we sit happily at the banquet of Jupiter.' But he did not wish to revolt from the external authority of the Church of the day. 'He is impious who wishes to know more than the Church. We bear on our forehead,' he says, 'the seal of the Cross, the standard of our King. Let us not be deserters; let nothing base be found in our camp.'"[1]

This attempt to maintain a double system could not possibly succeed, because in truth it was self-contradictory. To concede liberty anywhere is ultimately to concede it everywhere; and if the concession is not made by the Church, it will

[1] *v.* "History of the Reformation," vol. I, p. 65 f.

be made against the Church. Scepticism, of course, may remain in a rigidly orthodox church; but its confession will be prohibited even within the circles of the educated. Either the universities will lead the parishes; or the parishes will lead the universities. The Roman Church was slow to learn the lesson. At the start of the Renaissance, it seemed to many that the great intellectual enfranchisement would be directed by the Church; but very soon it became manifest that the two were natural foes. So long as the attempt was made by means of a policy of "RESERVE" to propitiate the scholars without shocking the faithful, the Roman Church was embarrassed by an inner contradiction, and gave way continually before the Reformation, but so soon as unity of purpose was restored by the repudiation of the scholars, the Reformation was, to the lasting injury of Religion, everywhere arrested. "The great and rapid victories of the sixteenth century," says LORD ACTON, "were gained over the unreformed and disorganized Catholicism of the Renaissance, not over the Church which had been renovated at Trent. Rome, with a contested authority and a contracted sphere, developed greater energy, resource, and power than when it exercised undivided sway over Christendom in the West. The recovery was accomplished by violence, and was due to the advent of men who did not shrink from blood in place

of the gracious idealists for whom LUTHER and CALVIN were too strong."[1]

While then the Roman Church in that eventful epoch attempted an impossible combination, and practised an essentially immoral "Reserve," the Reformers fell into the opposite error. Carried away by enthusiasm, and supposing that truths, which they themselves found spiritually satisfying, must be as much to all who heard them, they proclaimed to multitudes, whose simplicity and ignorance were extreme, doctrines which only a high level of spiritual attainment could render edifying. In the phrase of the Gospel, they "*gave that which is holy unto the dogs*," and "*cast their pearls before the swine.*" The consequences which followed were the reproach of the Reformation, and probably did far more than the efforts of the Jesuits, or the faggots of the Inquisition, to send men back in panic and disgust to the older system which they had abandoned. The Lutheran doctrine of "Justification by Faith only" became associated in men's experience with the most shocking excesses of antinomian fanaticism; the supremacy of the written Word became in the hands of ignorant enthusiasts the negation of all settled authority in the Church; the fact of spiritual equality, recklessly proclaimed to discontented and miserable multitudes, became the logical and religious

[1] *v.* "Lectures on Modern History," p. 124.

foundation for wild schemes of social revolution, which deluged Germany with blood. The "*dogs*" and "*swine*" acted as the Gospel says they will act, when the treasures of Divine truth, which they can neither understand nor value, are cast to them. "*They trampled them under their feet, and turned, and rent*" the reckless givers. Nevertheless, though the history of the Reformation offers an impressive warning against neglect of the conditions of sound teaching, it does not seem to be doubtful that the Reformers were right in their main principle.

The correlation of faith and knowledge has been maintained in the Protestant sphere in a measure which, outside that sphere, cannot be paralleled, and at the present moment the Protestant churches are able to face the difficulties of the time with a courage and hopefulness, which are visibly absent from the churches which refused to accept the Reformation. We at least are free from the disabling contradiction which seems to vitiate the position of the modernists in the Roman Church, and even to deprive them of the moral dignity which their labours and sufferings might well earn for them. We cannot but give them our sympathy, but we cannot as readily offer our approval. They are really — if I do not misconceive their position — seeking to persuade the Roman Church to return to that immoral dualism which was attempted at the

Renaissance, and perforce abandoned. Their success, which however is inconceivable, would secure intellectual liberty at the price of moral paralysis. Destructive criticism in the universities cannot coexist with Roman orthodoxy in the parishes. Better a hundred-fold the stress and confusion of Protestantism than the hypocritical unanimity of a Catholicism which does not believe its own postulates. Even the purblind and tyrannous obscurantism of the Vatican is morally more respectable than a system which cuts off the faith of the church from its historic roots, and plays with sacred words and acts till they lose all relation either to the reason or to the conscience of believers. If I permit myself to speak thus strongly of a movement which is illustrated by great learning and by a noble self-sacrifice, it is because I feel that the deepest interests of Christianity are at stake in disallowing the claim which the modernists, or some of them, are making. We are in presence of the old alternative, ERASMUS or LUTHER, an intellectual or a religious movement, a restatement of traditional beliefs determined by authority, or by the New Testament realized afresh as the Message of GOD to human souls. The questions which Religion is required to answer remain always the same; and the power of Religion is measured by its competence to answer them. It is the besetting sin of academic thinkers to magnify unduly the

intellectual aspects of Religion, whereas all turns on points which hardly come within the range of controversy. The gravity of clinging to intellectual errors arises from the moral degradation implied in refusal to recognize truth, far more than from the practical importance of the errors themselves.

Bear with me if I turn from historical review and general statements to the actual situation with which we ourselves are confronted. In some respects that situation has no exact parallel elsewhere, for the ecclesiastical conditions of this nation are admittedly unique. Of all the Reformed Churches the CHURCH OF ENGLAND has preserved most of the mediæval system in its government, its formularies, and its spirit. There has been great spiritual advantage in this, but not unmixed advantage. Some serious errors have been facilitated by it. In a petty insular version the experiment of the Renaissance is being again attempted within the English Church. There are those among us who would concede large liberty of thought and speech within the universities, who yet would narrowly restrain such liberty within the parishes. Their ideal of a Church is very much that of the Alexandrines with their doctrine of "Reserve," or of the earlier Churchmen of the Renaissance. I concede frankly the excuses for this attitude, and I do not question the sincerity of those who maintain

it; but I believe nothing more firmly than that it is fundamentally wrong, and can only bring disaster on the Church. It implies an inner contradiction fatal to self-respect, and ultimately destructive of religious power. Indeed in the long run I do not believe this attitude of recognition with limited reference is possible. Either the universities will lead the parishes, or the parishes will lead the universities; in other words, a church must be on one side or the other. In the intellectual sphere not less than in the moral the saying is ultimately verified: "*No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*" Precisely because I believe this so firmly, I would take leave to press on those who hold with me the duty of heeding the warning words of our LORD. We believe that "RESERVE" is only legitimate as a didactic instrument; that so soon as it fails to serve the interest of education it ceases to be legitimate; that the test of its legitimate use is the degree in which it ceases to be necessary; that the goal towards which as teachers we are bound to direct our efforts is the complete disuse of it. In the present stage of ecclesiastical development a wide discrepancy has again made itself apparent between knowledge and belief, and there is no educated man who is not conscious of the fact. The

circumstances of modern life almost compel the authorities of the Church in all its branches to consider how this fact shall be dealt with, not merely in the universities, where for many reasons their direct power is slight, but in the parishes, where they can determine the course, because they can make or mar the fortunes, of the average clergyman. The notion is widely distributed that the public teaching of the churches is lacking in candour, that it does not express the knowledge of the clergy, or fairly reflect their personal convictions. That notion is widely distributed and freely expressed by the non-church-going classes. but our church-goers are still for the most part wedded to the forms and phrases to which they have been accustomed, and extremely resentful of any teaching which seems to handle them roughly. Unless the public teaching of the pulpit is to fall into hopeless discredit, if the clergy are not to forfeit all claim to be teachers, these timidly conservative congregations have to be persuaded to alter their opinions, to abandon many cherished notions, to accept a larger view of Christianity than at present they can imagine. The practical problem which the clergyman, as teacher, has to solve is how to present the novel and unwelcome truth in such wise that it shall not alienate but persuade the hearers. It is neither reasonable nor charitable for him to force on those, who are mentally or morally

incompetent to understand or receive his doctrine, teachings, however in his own eyes true and important, which can only startle and offend his hearers. The very difficulty of honest teaching will urge him, by an immoral silence, to go the way of least resistance. He will be greatly tempted to conceal his convictions; he will be officially exhorted and encouraged to make the contentment of his congregation the standard of his success as a teacher; he will certainly have little or no professional reward for attempting the difficult and dangerous task of teaching sincerely. Every failure will be magnified: every effort will be misconstrued: every success will be belittled. The great danger at present is that the sense of official disapprobation will in the case of the better sort of clergyman act as an incentive to recklessness in teaching; and that teaching, thus recklessly given, will provoke resentments and create panic among the generality of church-goers. To the English clergyman to-day as he puts his hand to the task of religious teaching, a task always difficult but now beset with singular risks, the warning of CHRIST is manifestly relevant: "*Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you.*"

If any one be disposed to censure harshly the faults of those whom it is the fashion to describe

as "LIBERAL" CHURCHMEN, I would venture to advance this claim on their behalf. They are standing, at some personal sacrifice and at much personal risk, between the National Church and the spiritual sterility which must sooner or later befall every church which accepts the ancient distinction between exoteric and esoteric truth, not merely as an unavoidable incident of ecclesiastical life, but as a settled policy. They are affirming the principle of theological progress, and sustaining the standard of clerical rectitude. They are the mediators between the universities and the parishes, and they create the atmosphere of public interest which is vital to the influence of academic thought. I would invoke for them the sympathy and assistance of the universities, and if I might dare to make appeal to those cultivated and religious laymen who approve their efforts, I would claim from them something more than silent and passive approbation. With us, however, cheered and defended, or frowned upon and deserted, it is matter of conscience that we should hold together our public witness and our personal conviction. With S. PAUL we can but meet the critics of our teaching with a reference to the Divine obligation of the ministry which we have received: "*We have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth*

commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

I have been led to speak specially of the text as applying to the case of the clergy, embarrassed in their work as teachers by the suspicions and prejudices of believers; but I must not bring my sermon to an end without a reference to another application, perhaps more important for most of my present hearers. An university is the scene of free discussion. No subject is too sacred or too difficult for the freest handling by those whose natural intelligence is as yet unshadowed by experience and unhampered by knowledge. Into this atmosphere of fierce and indiscriminating debate the Christian youth must carry the traditions of piety and reverence which he has received from home, or those more recent and dominating impressions which gather round the mysterious fact of "conversion." His innocence, or his enthusiasm, or the weak complaisance of his nature, may lead him to speak freely of Religion in company where the very meaning of Religion is scarcely known. Let him be on his guard, and heed the words of the LORD. "*Give not that which is holy unto the dogs.*" The contemptuous phrase "*dogs*" was current at the time on Jewish lips as a synomym for Gentiles, whom the Jews held to be profane. Later the word was transferred to Christian usage, and applied by the Gentile believers to the unbelieving Jews.

"As a term of reproach," says Bishop Lightfoot, "the word on the lips of a Jew signified chiefly 'impurity'; of a Greek, 'impudence.'" I remind you of the primitive suggestions of the scornful word, because these distinct but kindred qualities of impurity and impudence attach always and everywhere to religious discussions, which are carried on by persons who themselves are irreligious. "*The pure in heart see God*," said CHRIST. "*Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter the Kingdom*," HE said again; exalting thus into the primary conditions of religious apprehension these gracious qualities of purity and simplicity. Take care then, with whom you speak of religious matters, and in what spirit. "*Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you.*" The faithful clergyman ever finds his difficulties from the prejudices and passions of religious people; the faithful layman most often finds his from those of irreligious. To both the warning of CHRIST has manifest relevance.

Every one of us is primarily responsible for the wardship of his own character; none of us can afford to neglect that trust; for the strongest, as we reckon, and the weakest, the humble prayer which the LORD gave us to use is needed, "*Lead us not into temptation.*" The mere fact that we can

talk easily before unsympathetic or incredulous people about the sacred things of Religion, that we can listen without a holy intolerance to unworthy language about the Faith which we profess, is evidence of some spiritual failure, and may be the prophecy of more. Forgive me, if in affection and concern, I pray you to be on your guard in the free intercourse of this place. You owe such vigilance to yourself; you owe it to those in whose company you are brought; above all you owe it to HIM, Whose Name you bear, and Whose pledged servant you are.

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the Body of Xt – Thus will
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care
Careful of pressing our claims –

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